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SHAKESPEARE'S  
MIDSUMMER-  
NIGHT'S  
DREAM

Macmillan's Pocket Classics

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Edward T. Crowley, Ph.D.

**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

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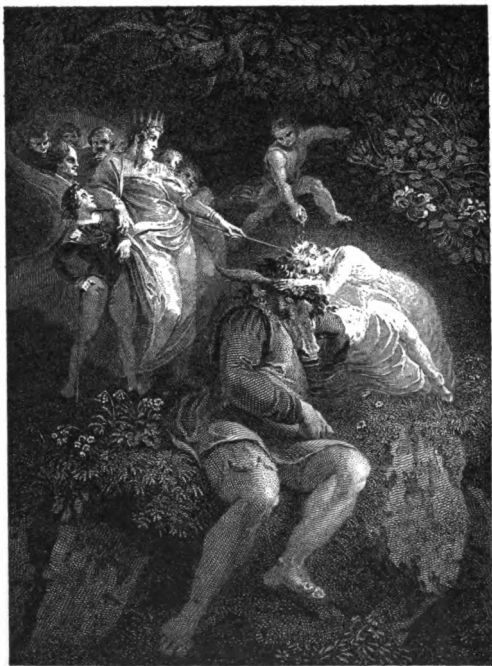
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**A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**  
**ACT IV, SCENE I**

SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY  
OF  
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

EDITED  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES  
BY  
ERNEST CLAPP NOYES, A.M.  
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, NORMAL HIGH SCHOOL  
PITTSBURG, PENN.

New York  
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1920

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## PREFACE

THE text of this edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* follows in the main that of the Riverside Edition, prepared by R. G. White. The more important divergencies from this text with the authorities followed are mentioned in the notes.

The chief sources from which information has been drawn in the preparation of the helps are given in the Bibliography. Especially, the editor wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Rolfe's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to Chambers' *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and to Dr. Furness's Variorum Edition.

Since in some schools students do not have access to books of reference, it has seemed expedient to err on the side of fulness in the notes, and, therefore, to furnish all necessary information not to be found in an ordinary dictionary. For the rest, if this edition aids the student to imagine the environment in which the play was produced and to appreciate it as a delicate and delicious comedy, the purpose of the editor will have been accomplished.

PITTSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA,  
February, 1908.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	V
INTRODUCTION	
The Life of Shakespeare . . . . .	ix
The Elizabethan Age . . . . .	xxvii
The Drama . . . . .	xxx
Theatres . . . . .	xxxiii
A Midsummer Night's Dream . . . . .	xxxv
Critical Comments . . . . .	xxxvii
The Metre of the Play . . . . .	xliii
Bibliography . . . . .	xlvi
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM . . . . .	
NOTES . . . . .	103
COMPOSITION SUBJECTS . . . . .	140
INDEX TO NOTES . . . . .	141



# INTRODUCTION



## THE LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE

**The Study of the Life of an Author.**—In the Introduction to the Sir Roger de Coverley Papers, Addison remarks, “I have observed that a reader seldom peruses a book with pleasure till he knows whether the writer of it be a black or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor, with other particulars of a like nature that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author.” On the other hand, it may be observed with at least equal truth that a reader seldom peruses the life of an author with intelligence and interest until he knows something of the author’s works. In the mass of facts he has no means of distinguishing those that bear upon the man’s writings and those that do not. The relation between the facts of an author’s life and his writings is like a puzzle which can be worked much more easily backward than forward. Knowing the solution, we can with



less effort discover how it was obtained. In like manner, having found certain qualities in an author's works, we can search in his life for influences that tend to produce those qualities. With this definite aim to direct our search, we may find interesting and important many particulars that, without such clues as are afforded by the writings, would be overlooked. The life and the works of an author should be studied together, for each sheds light upon the other.

**The Mystery of Shakespeare's Genius.** — The universal interest in Shakespeare's writings has probably given rise to more curiosity about the facts of his life and about the influences that surrounded him than has ever been excited in the case of any other man. Though our knowledge is far from complete, the little that we do know of Shakespeare's life satisfies to some extent this natural curiosity and enables us to conjecture the sources of some of the qualities found in his plays. Nevertheless, all that we can learn only increases our wonder at the mystery of his genius.

**His Birth.** — William Shakespeare was born in Stratford, a small town in the beautiful country of Warwickshire, England, April 23, 1564.

**His Father.** — His father, John Shakespeare, was a prosperous citizen, who supported himself by farming and by making and selling gloves. His purchase of two estates in Stratford shows that he was successful

before his marriage, but that event undoubtedly increased the consideration in which he was held by his fellow-citizens, for he married an heiress. Soon after his wedding, John Shakespeare became a candidate for public office, and occupied successively the positions of ale-taster, burgess, constable, affeeror,<sup>1</sup> chamberlain, and high bailiff. To this last and highest honor he was elected in 1568, when the future poet was four years old. Of his character, we know only by the frequency with which he engaged in lawsuits that he must have been disputatious, and from his success in business that he must have been a shrewd and industrious tradesman. From him, perhaps, William Shakespeare gained his great energy and his skill in practical affairs.

**Shakespeare's Mother.**—The poet's mother, Mary Arden, was of gentle birth. Though it has been said that she inherited considerable property for that time, it must not be assumed that in culture or in manner of life she was greatly superior to the ordinary farmer's daughter. Neither of Shakespeare's parents was well educated, and his mother could not write her name. In her girlhood, probably, she spent her time chiefly upon household tasks; she may even have performed manual labor beside the men in the fields of her father's farm; yet she must have inherited from

<sup>1</sup> A kind of assessor.

her ancestors some of the qualities of good breeding. It is quite likely that her son derived from her his instinctive good taste.

**His Brothers and Sisters.** — Four of the children of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden lived to grow up. Of these, William was the oldest, and the only one to become famous. The others were Gilbert, only two and a half years younger than William; Joan, born in 1569; and Edmund. The youngest daughter, Anne, died in 1579 at the age of eight. During the poet's boyhood, therefore, he enjoyed the wholesome, natural intercourse that prevails among brothers and sisters in a large family.

**Stratford.** — The town of Stratford-on-Avon, where the first twenty-three years of Shakespeare's life were spent, contained at that time about fourteen hundred inhabitants. The streets and lanes were narrow, irregular, unsanitary, and ill-smelling; the houses were roughly built of timber with projecting gables and thatched roofs, and they stood in the utmost disorder, some in the midst of gardens and some in the open. The two chief buildings were the Church by the river Avon and the Guildhall, where players sometimes performed. Altogether, Stratford, though no worse than any other town of the sixteenth century, would seem to us a most ill-kempt and unattractive place of residence.

**The Surrounding Country.** — The country about Stratford, on the other hand, has always been celebrated as one of the most charming districts in England. Along each side of the peaceful Avon stretch rich meadows abounding in wild flowers and in song-birds of many kinds, while back from the river in Shakespeare's time extended wide stretches of woodland. The region, also, contained many old battle-fields and was rich in traditions, which Shakespeare as a boy must have heard from his elders. Such surroundings could hardly fail to stimulate the imagination of the sensitive youth and to arouse his appreciation of noble forms, lovely colors, and heroic deeds.

**References in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the Country.** — Traces of Shakespeare's loving familiarity with the fields and the woods appear frequently in his writings. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the author is probably drawing upon his recollections in the description of the effects upon the landscape of a summer of tempest and flood : —

“the green corn  
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard ;  
And crows are fatted with the murrain flock ;  
The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,  
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green  
For lack of tread are undistinguishable.”

— II, i, 94-100.

Again, the young Shakespeare must often have been a spectator of such a scene as Puck describes : —

“ As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,  
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
Rising and cawing at the gun’s report,  
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,  
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly.”

— III, ii, 20-24.

**Shakespeare’s Interest in Sports.** — This reference to the wild geese suggests that Shakespeare, who, we may be sure, was a healthy, natural boy, took the same interest in hunting and hawking, the chief sports of his time, that the modern boy finds in football and baseball. In fact, his plays contain so many expressions peculiar to hunting and hawking that we cannot doubt his familiarity with these recreations. Coursing matches, too, evidently drew his attention, for in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* he makes Master Shallow discuss Master Page’s fallow greyhound, which “ was out-run on Cotsall,” a famous coursing ground.

**His Opportunities of Seeing Plays.** — Another amusement of his elders in which the boy Shakespeare may have shared was the representation of plays by strolling theatrical companies. During the bailiffship of Shakespeare’s father, dramatic entertainments were heard at Stratford for the first time. From this fact

it is thought by some that the elder Shakespeare had a decided taste for the drama, which led him to encourage the production of plays. It is barely possible that he took his little son, only five years old at the time of his father's bailiffship, to see some of the performances; for we know that another boy of five years was taken to a play in 1569. At any rate, he could hardly have missed other performances that were given when he was older, and he may even have watched the famous pageants in the streets of Coventry, which is only a short distance from Stratford. In 1575, Kenilworth, but fifteen miles from Shakespeare's home, was the scene of a series of splendid spectacles given by the Earl of Leicester for Queen Elizabeth. Inasmuch as the reference to "a mermaid on a dolphin's back" in Act II., Scene i., of this play may be applied to an incident in one of these entertainments, many think that Shakespeare, then a boy of eleven, was present at the Kenilworth masques and that this line is based upon his recollection of what he saw.

**Shakespeare's Schooling.** — Attractive as sports and theatrical performances probably were to the youth, his boyhood was not all recreation. At the age of seven he was sent to the Stratford Free Grammar School. Here the curriculum included considerable Latin, and the elements of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric; the more practical studies of our grammar

schools were missing. In Latin he studied the forms from Lily's Latin Grammar, read a book called the *Sententiæ Pueriles*, from which he sometimes quotes, and went on to the study of the poets, Vergil and Ovid. When he was thirteen, Shakespeare was obliged by his father's business losses to leave school. Thereafter, as long as he remained at home, he was probably unable, if he desired, to increase his book-learning; for, outside of the church and the school, in all Stratford there were at this time probably not two dozen volumes. However, when the youth was deprived of opportunities for the study of books, his keen observation of nature and of the people about him continued to develop his powers and to increase his stores of knowledge. Life was his best school.

**His Occupations in the Years 1577-1587.** — Of Shakespeare's occupation between 1577, when he left school, and 1587, when he went to London, we cannot be certain. According to one tradition, he worked in an attorney's office; but this tale has not been proved, and the numerous and accurate legal allusions in his plays which have lent color to this supposition may perhaps be traced to his father's frequent lawsuits. Aubrey, a rather unreliable biographer of the seventeenth century, says that Shakespeare was apprenticed to a butcher, and adds that, when the youth killed a calf, he would do it in high style and make a speech.

Whatever his employment was between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, he profited by the excellent opportunities that a small town affords for the study of human nature, and no doubt enjoyed many dramatic performances, since the best companies of the time visited Stratford.

**His Marriage.** — In 1582 occurred one of the most important events of Shakespeare's life, his marriage to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer in the neighboring hamlet of Shottery. Shakespeare was only nineteen, while his wife was eight years older. In the following year their daughter, Susanna, was born, and in 1585 there followed twins, Hamnet and Judith. There has been much discussion whether the poet was happy in his marriage, and passages from his plays are often cited to prove that his love faded. The truth is, however, that we possess too little information upon this subject to reach any certain conclusion.

**The Story of His Poaching.** — Shakespeare's departure from Stratford, which took place about 1587, and his long separation from his family while he was at work in London, can be satisfactorily explained upon other grounds. The story is that the immediate cause of his leaving home was a quarrel with Sir Thomas Lucy, an important and influential nobleman of the vicinity. With some companions, Shakespeare, who as we have seen was fond of sports, stole deer



from a park belonging to Sir Thomas. When he was prosecuted for this poaching, he retorted by ridiculing the nobleman in a ballad with such effect that the latter redoubled his prosecution. In this connection it is interesting to note that in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare introduces a pun upon the word "Luces," parts of a coat-of-arms, likening it to "louses." His ballad is said to have contained the same insulting comparison in the words, "O lowsie Lucy." Whether in consequence of this poaching adventure or for some other reason, Shakespeare left Stratford about 1587 and went to London.

**London in Shakespeare's Time.** — London was then a city of only about 150,000 people, that is, of about the same size as Providence, Indianapolis, or Rochester, and was still enclosed by walls, outside of which were lonely fields. Within the walls, the streets were narrow and dirty, poorly paved, dusty in dry weather and muddy in wet, while at all times there ran in the gutters streams of odorous filth. On account of the poor condition of the highways, the Thames was used not only as a thoroughfare between London and Westminster across the river, but also for travel up and down the stream. At all hours of the day the boatmen made the air resound with their cries of "Eastward Ho!" and "Westward Ho!" Along the banks of the river stood imposing palaces, built like castles

and closely connected with the reigns of kings of the past. Such interesting buildings would naturally arouse in the beholder a desire to know something about the lives and deaths of their owners. To this curiosity Shakespeare shrewdly ministered in his historical plays. Other prominent buildings were Westminster Abbey, which is still standing; Westminster Hall, where the Courts of Justice were held; St. Paul's Cathedral, which was burned in 1666; and London Bridge, which was lined with houses and had towers like forts. Over the heads of the passers-by who thronged the roadway of the bridge, dangled the heads of traitors, bleaching in the sunshine. Such was the London of the sixteenth century, a rude and half-civilized, yet an imposing, metropolis.

**The Influence of the City upon Shakespeare.**—Shakespeare came to the city at a time of unprecedented prosperity and growth. Sensitive as he was to fresh impressions, the gay life of the capital with the new sights and new sounds, the new types of character, and the new stories that he encountered, must have fascinated the country youth. The familiarity that he soon gained with the incidents and characters of this new world was valuable to him later in furnishing some of the most lifelike touches in his plays.

**Early Employments in London.**—At first Shakespeare had difficulty in finding employment and lived

the life of a needy adventurer. According to tradition, he was for a time a stable boy, who held the horses of gentlemen while they were at the theatre, and later he became a prompter's assistant. At any rate, he soon became attached to the Earl of Leicester's Company of players, and rose rapidly in the profession of an actor, which he followed for the rest of his active life.

**The Growth of his Reputation.** — In 1592, five years after his arrival in London, Shakespeare had begun to attain such fame both as an actor and as an author that his rivals were envious. One of these, Greene, in ridiculing a company of players, wrote that among them "is an upstart crow — that supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blank verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes factotum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shakescene in a country." Later in the same year, Chettle, the publisher of Greene's attack, in apologizing for it, speaks of Shakespeare as "exelent in the quality he professes"; i.e. excellent as an actor, and says that "divers of worship [worthy of respect] have reported his uprightness of dealing which argues his honesty, and his facetious [felicitous] grace in writing that aprooves his art." The first quotation shows that he had attracted attention; the second that he was appreciated.

**Early Playwriting.** — Soon after he had entered

upon his stage life, the young actor began to touch up and revise old plays for the performances of his company. In this work he was, doubtless, at first associated with older playwrights, and profited by their experience. Before long, however, he outgrew his collaborators and became independent of their assistance. So rapidly did he work that within six years after his arrival in London he had written or revised a half dozen or more plays.

**His Reputation as a Poet.** — However, until the publication of his poem, *Venus and Adonis*, in 1593, the reading public knew little of Shakespeare's literary ability, for in those days, plays were seldom printed, and so they reached only the limited number who heard them in the theatre. The appearance of this work, on the other hand, at once assured the author's reputation as a poet. The young Earl of Southampton, to whom the poem was dedicated, became a warm and generous friend of the writer, and even royalty took notice of him. In the Christmas holidays of 1593 he acted before the Queen as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company. His reception into aristocratic circles now gave him opportunities, which he did not neglect, to study the ways of the nobility and of the Court.

**His Industry.** — While thus honored by the great, Shakespeare did not cease his industry. Having

established his literary reputation by a second poem, *The Lucrece*, which appeared in 1594, he returned to play-writing and in the next sixteen years produced twenty-eight or twenty-nine dramas. Comedies, tragedies, historical plays, and romances, each revealing some new aspect of the author's genius, flowed in quick succession from his facile pen. Altogether he wrote thirty-seven plays.

**The Four Groups of his Plays: Early Comedies and Histories.** — The Period of Experiment. Though there is much dispute about the dates of particular plays, since less than half of them were published during his lifetime, Shakespeare's plays are usually divided into four groups, corresponding to four successive periods in his life. The first group in order contains the plays composed when Shakespeare was a young man full of youthful fantasy, romance, and optimism. At this time, too, while he was trying his powers, he experimented with various kinds of plays. Thus, in these early years, he wrote comedies of various kinds and several historical plays, besides retouching a number of plays by other authors. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a characteristic work of this period of gay, poetic experiments.

**Later Comedies and Histories.** — In the next period he still took a joyous view of life; but by this time he had acquired a broader knowledge of humanity and a

surer grip of his art. Some plays belonging to this period and revealing his more serious study of life are *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. This is the period of his greatest comedies and of the great historical plays.

**Tragedies.** — The third group seem to show that their author had been brought into close contact with the sorrows of life. The plays assigned to the years from 1601 to 1608 are concerned with the deepest, saddest problems of human existence. These dramas are the great tragedies: *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*.

**Romances.** — In the plays written after 1608, Shakespeare returned to cheerful subjects, which he treated in the calm, peaceful manner of one who had risen from his survey of evil with a loftier, more serene faith than before in the ultimate triumph of goodness. Typical plays presenting this contented view of life are *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*.

**The Sonnets.** — In addition to his dramas and the two long poems mentioned, Shakespeare wrote at various times a large number of exquisite sonnets, dealing with love and friendship. These were published without his approval in 1609.

**Shakespeare's Income.** — The remarkable industry which enabled Shakespeare to produce so many plays

in such a short time while he was also busy with his acting, met with adequate reward. His works brought their author large sums, which he invested wisely, for unlike most men of genius, he was shrewd in matters of business. In 1597 he bought New Place, the largest house in Stratford, to which he later retired. From local documents we know that a year later he had a considerable reputation in Stratford for wealth and influence. From the date of its erection, 1599, he seems to have been a chief shareholder in the Globe Theatre. With his salary as an actor added to his other sources of revenue, it is estimated that before 1599 his average annual income was equivalent to over \$5000 in our times. In spite of his prosperity, Shakespeare continued to act until 1604, for in that year he was enrolled among the "King's Servants," a name given to the band of nine players who accompanied James upon his royal entry into London. With his writing, his acting, and his careful attention to the details of business, his life in the years of his success must have been exceedingly full.

**His Visits to Stratford.** — During the years of his residence in London, Shakespeare often returned to Stratford. Probably, however, his first visit was not made till 1596, nine years after he had left home. All this time his father's affairs had been growing worse and worse, but the poet's visit brought about a

complete change for the better. Thereafter he seems to have visited the town at least once a year. Some family events that may have called him home are the death of his son, Hamnet, in 1596; the death of his father in 1601; the marriage of his favorite daughter, Susanna, to Dr. John Hall in 1607; and his mother's death in 1608. Though he lived in London so long, he was always described in formal documents as "of Stratford-on-Avon."

**His Retirement.** — Evidently he never lost his love for the scenes of his youth and always entertained the hope of returning to them for the end of his days. It is pleasant to know that, after the turmoil of his busy life, the poet was able, in 1612, to carry out this long-cherished plan by retiring to Stratford for a brief period of happiness. Here we can imagine him as spending a few quiet years of ease with the wife of his youth, his daughters, and his little granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall. The last family ceremony before his death was the marriage of his daughter, Judith, to Thomas Quiney.

**His Death.** — A few months after this wedding Shakespeare died, at the age of fifty-two. The date of his death is April 23, 1616. Over his grave in the parish church at Stratford rests the inscription attributed to the poet himself: —



“Good frend, for Jesus’ sake forbear  
To digg the dust enclosed heare :  
Bleste be the man that spares thes stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.”

**His Will.** — At his death, Shakespeare left three hundred and fifty pounds, besides real estate and personal property. His eldest daughter, Mrs. Hall, inherited the bulk of his possessions. Small bequests were also received by other relatives and by a number of friends, including several fellow-actors. Some have thought that his leaving to his wife only a second-best bed was an intentional slight; but if it be remembered that by this time she was past sixty, probably infirm with age and ignorant of affairs, his treatment of her is readily understood. He must have known that she was sure of a comfortable home for the rest of her life with the Halls in New Place, and it was only kindness to relieve her of the responsibility of property.

**Shakespeare’s Character.** — Of Shakespeare’s traits of character we can infer but little. His industry has already received comment. Contemporary references to him mention his uprightness and his gentle, unassuming manners. Tradition reports that he was of a sociable nature and much sought at convivial gatherings like those held by men of letters at the Mermaid Tavern, and his plays show that he was thoroughly conversant with tavern life. He was a shrewd man

of business and his aim in life seems to have been the common one to secure a competence for himself and his family. Unlike many great geniuses, he did not take a distorted view of life, but remained to the end perfectly sane and normal.

### THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

**The Material Expansion of the Age.** — The Elizabethan age, during which Shakespeare lived, is one of the most interesting and remarkable periods in English history. In no other age could the genius of Shakespeare have found surroundings so favorable to its development. During Elizabeth's reign, from a variety of causes, there came a wonderful awakening in national spirit. The nation had increased rapidly in wealth, and there was great activity in all kinds of trade, in response to the demand for more of the comforts of life. The manufactures thus stimulated at home brought about an unprecedented mingling of all classes and aided to create a middle class. At the same time the discoveries and explorations of the great mariners, like Drake and Raleigh, laid the foundations of England's vast foreign commerce and opened a new world for colonization. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which assured England's supremacy on the seas, fanned to a flame the already glowing

patriotism of the people, and filled them with pride in the glories of the nation. Such was the material prosperity of the age.

**The Intellectual Expansion.** — Along with this growth in wealth, commerce, and power came a corresponding quickening of intelligence. The knowledge of new lands and new races brought back from the New World by sailors and travellers stirred the imaginations of the nation. A new spirit of religious toleration that was instituted by the queen, and a love of travel that caused a tour of the continent to become part of every gentleman's education, combined to broaden men's minds. The study of Italian literature and of new and popular translations of the Greek and Latin Classics improved the literary tastes of the time, and the Italian authors found many imitators. A new sense of human power and a spirit of confidence due to the marvellous achievements of the age made men consider no intellectual problems too difficult to discuss. At the same time the awakening of national feeling aroused interest in the past of the nation. Another growing influence was contributed by the lofty moral standards of the Puritans. Intellectual ambition and effort kept pace with material progress. The age was characterized by an eagerness of mind and a curiosity for knowledge, the like of which the world has never seen.

**The Extravagance of the Age.** — In such an era of expansion, both material and intellectual, men did not heed trifles. Extravagance was the dominant note of the times. Even the dress reflected this tendency; men as well as women wore the most rich and striking costumes of the gayest colors. Great expense was lavished upon splendid pageants and elaborate entertainments, both private and public. Ready to believe anything possible, no matter how exaggerated, the Elizabethans risked great sums of money on the most hazardous speculations and squandered fortunes recklessly. The enthusiasm of the age gave rise to a delight in mere existence and to a passion for seeing as many sides of life as possible. In every way men sought to find new modes of giving expression to their restless energy and enthusiasm.

**The Effect of the Spirit of the Age upon Literature.** — The very language was infected by the extravagant spirit of the period and for a time the most affected phrases and the most absurd and fanciful figures of speech were the fashion. But a deeper and far more valuable result of the conditions that have been described was an unprecedented outpouring of literature which voiced the passionate feelings of the age. In it the Elizabethan authors gave free rein to their aroused imaginations and “affected thoughts coequal with the clouds.” The literature produced in this age far sur-

passes that of any other period in the history of the Anglo-Saxon race. It is as many-sided, as passionate, as full of flights of imagination and of high ideals as was the life of the period; for, in the words of Shakespeare, it holds "the mirror up to nature" and shows "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Because of this faithfulness to the unrestrained nature of the Elizabethans, the writings of this time are full of coarse and repulsive passages; but we must remember that standards have changed much since the sixteenth century, and that most of what is displeasing to our fastidious taste was then considered inoffensive. Shakespeare's works in comparison with others of the time are remarkably free from coarseness and vulgarity, while they excel all others in the portrayal of life.

## THE DRAMA

**The Popularity of the Drama.**—The eagerness of the people of this age to see in a small compass as much of life and action as possible, together with the general lack among the masses of the ability to read, made the drama the most popular form of literature during Elizabeth's reign. In this period the plays which presented "infinite riches in a little room" and which could be enjoyed by the illiterate as well as by the

educated, were as popular as the novel is to-day. The dramas told stories not only more concisely but also more clearly and more forcefully than the dull prose tales and romances of the time. Consequently, this was a dramatic age.

**The Miracles, Moralities, and Interludes.** — Through the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries the drama had been developing slowly in England. It originated, strange as it may seem, in the Church. There, rude tableaux were given by the priests on Christmas, Easter, and other Church festivals to make the Biblical events commemorated by these celebrations more real to the ignorant people. These representations were so successful in arousing interest that in the fifteenth century nearly all the great Bible stories were acted, often with considerable skill. These dramatizations of Bible stories were called *Miracle Plays*. At about the same time there sprang up allegorical plays, in which the characters were personifications of abstract qualities: such as Hypocrisy, Avarice, Intemperance, Truth, and Good Deeds. These plays were called *Moralities*. There were also short, humorous dialogues, or incidents more original than those in the *Miracle* and *Morality* plays, which were called *Interludes*, because they were given between the courses of a banquet or between the acts of a longer play. Sometimes these entertainments

were based upon history or legend, as in the case of Bottom's play of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, which is an interlude. When accompanied by music, dancing, and elaborate costumes, the Interludes were called Masques. These various kinds of plays sowed the seeds from which sprang the drama.

**The Beginning of the Drama.** — In spite of the popularity of such early dramatic entertainments there was no real English play in our sense of the word till about 1550. Eleven years later, in 1561, the first English tragedy was produced. Thus the birth of the drama preceded but a little the birth of Shakespeare. The taste of the public for dramatic entertainments and the skill of writers in satisfying this taste had been so long cultivated by the Miracles, Moralities, and Interludes, that the drama burst into full bloom almost at once.

**Shakespeare's Predecessors and Contemporaries.** — When Shakespeare came up to London and began his professional career, he found a little group of men there, each of whom through some gift of his own had already achieved success as a playwright. Lyly had captivated the public by clever plays upon words; Peele had produced most melodious dramatic poetry; Greene had shown his power to tell a romantic story; and Marlowe, the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors, had depicted gigantic passions in a

smoothly flowing blank verse. Shakespeare, who combined the gifts of them all with others of his own, began by working in collaboration with some of these authors, but soon outgrew his associates. Yet he owed much to them. They had laid sound foundations without which he could hardly have constructed his plays. In Shakespeare the art of playwriting reached its climax. Second only to Shakespeare, however, were such contemporary dramatists as Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Webster. And there were many others only slightly inferior in rank. As regards both quality and quantity, the latter quarter of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century must be called the golden age of English dramatic literature.

### THEATRES

**The Scarcity of Theatres.** — When Shakespeare began to write his plays, there were but two theatres in London, the "Curtain" and "The Theatre," and because of Puritan prejudice both of these were outside of the city walls. Several others were built during his lifetime, but never during the reign of Elizabeth or James was a public theatre permitted within the walls.

**An Early Theatre.** — An early theatre was a circu



lar wooden structure only partly roofed with thatch and surmounted by a flag while a play was being produced. Under the open sky in the centre of the building, where the cheapest places were, stood the mechanics and apprentices, who bought oranges and apples, quarrelled, fought, and conducted themselves in a very unruly manner. This section was called the pit. Into it extended the stage upon which sat gayly dressed dandies, playing cards, smoking, and making insolent remarks about actors and audience. The semicircle enclosing the pit was occupied by small boxes. In these rooms tradesmen and the lower gentry had their seats. Ladies seldom attended a performance, and then wore masks to conceal their identity. Nor were there any actresses. The women's parts were all taken by boys, who, if we may believe contemporary critics, exhibited great skill. Performances began at three o'clock in the afternoon. When the play was about to commence, there was a flourish of trumpets. Then an actor recited a piece of verse called the prologue, which hinted at the nature of the play and besought the favor of the audience. After this introduction the curtain was drawn and the play began. The costumes of the actors, though often rich and costly, were not historically accurate, and there was little scenery. The stage had the same setting for a forest as for Theseus's court, and the light had to be the same for both night

and day. Occasionally a sign with the name of the place seems to have been hung out to indicate a change of scene. The absence of adequate scenery forced the playwrights to make every effort so to picture the setting in their verse that the audience could supply from their imaginations what was lacking in reality. Though the scenery was of slight account, there existed some elaborate properties and ingenious mechanical devices, like the horse of Troy, for, there were good stage-carpenters. At the rear of the stage stood, at all times, a sort of balcony called the "Heavens," from which spirits descended and to which they ascended. Such limited stage settings made great demands upon the imagination of the spectators and compelled the dramatists to exert themselves to the utmost to retain attention.

### A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**Date and Texts.**—The date of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is uncertain. Perhaps it was written in 1593 or 1594. At all events, scholars generally agree that it was one of Shakespeare's early plays. It was first published by itself in two different quarto editions in 1600, and upon one of these was based the text of the Folio, the first complete edition of Shakespeare's plays, which was published by two of his friends after his death.

**Sources.** — Unlike most of Shakespeare's plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems to have been almost wholly the poet's own invention. In the plots of most of his plays he unhesitatingly adopted material lying ready to his hand in history, legend, tale, or older play; but though some suppose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to be based on a lost play called *Huon of Bordeaux*, only a few details can be traced to any known source. The names of Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate are found in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, which is pervaded with the spirit of chivalry that Theseus typifies. North's translation of *Plutarch's Lives* probably furnished the names of Theseus's former loves, the mention of the battle with the Centaurs, and the reference to the conquest of Thebes. Puck, better known as Robin Goodfellow, was the subject of many tales in English folklore. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe was familiar to all educated people of the time, though Shakespeare may have taken it direct from the Latin poet, Ovid. Save for these trifles, the play is the invention of Shakespeare's brain.

**The Name.** — The name, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was probably due to its first being performed at midsummer or was given in recognition of its appropriateness for the night when fairies hold sway.

## CRITICAL COMMENTS

HAZLITT, 1817: Puck is the leader of the fairy band. He is the Ariel of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and yet as unlike as can be to the Ariel in *The Tempest*. No other poet could have made two such different characters out of the same fanciful materials and situations. Ariel is a minister of retribution, who is touched with a sense of pity at the woes he inflicts. Puck is a madcap sprite, full of wantonness and mischief, who laughs at those whom he misleads—"Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Ariel clears the air and executes his mission with the zeal of a winged messenger; Puck is borne along on his fairy errand like the light and glittering gossamer before the breeze. He is, indeed, a most epicurean little gentleman, dealing in quaint devices and faring in dainty delights.

Prospero and his world of spirits are a set of moralists, but with Oberon and his fairies we are launched at once into the empire of the butterflies. How beautifully is this race of beings contrasted with the men and women actors in the scene, by a single epithet which Titania gives to the latter, "the human mortals"! It is astonishing that Shakespeare should be considered, not only by foreigners but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who

painted nothing but "gorgons and hydras and chimeras dire." His subtlety exceeds that of all dramatic writers, insomuch that a celebrated person of the present day said he regarded him rather as a metaphysician than as a poet. His delicacy and sportive gayety are infinite. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* alone we should imagine there is more sweetness and beauty of description than in the whole range of French poetry put together.

AUGUSTINE SKOTTOWE: Few plays consist of such incongruous materials as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It comprises no less than four histories: that of Theseus and Hippolyta; of the four Athenian lovers; the actors; and the fairies. It is not, indeed, absolutely necessary to separate Theseus and Hippolyta from the lovers, nor the actors from the fairies; but the link of connection is extremely slender. Nothing can be more irregularly wild than to bring into contact the Fairy mythology of modern Europe and the early events of Grecian history, or to introduce Snug, Bottom, Flute, Snout, and Starveling, "hard-handed men which never labored in their minds till now," as amateur actors in the classic city of Athens.

Of the characters constituting the serious action of this play, Theseus and Hippolyta are entirely devoid of interest. Lysander and Demetrius, and Hermia and Helena, scarcely merit notice, except on the

account of the frequent combination of elegance, delicacy, and vigor, in their complaints, lamentations, and pleadings, and the ingenuity displayed in the management of their cross-purposed love through three several changes. Bottom and his companions are probably highly drawn caricatures of some of the monarchs of the scene whom Shakespeare found in favor and popularity when he first appeared in London, and in the bickerings, jealousies, and contemptible conceits which he has represented, we are furnished with a picture of the green-room politics of the Globe.

Of all spirits it was peculiar to fairies to be actuated by the feelings and passions of mankind. The loves, jealousies, quarrels, and caprices of the dramatic king give a striking exemplification of this infirmity. Oberon is by no means backward in the assertion of supremacy over his royal consort, who, to do her justice, is as little disposed as any earthly beauty tacitly to acquiesce in the pretensions of her redoubted lord. But knowledge, we have been gravely told, is power, and the animating truth is exemplified by the issue of the contest between Oberon and Titania: his Majesty's acquaintance with the secret virtues of herbs and flowers compels the wayward queen to yield what neither love nor beauty could force from her.

An air of peculiar lightness distinguishes the poet's treatment of his extremely fanciful subject from his subsequent and bolder flights into the regions of the spiritual world. He rejected from the drama on which he engrafted it everything calculated to detract from its playfulness or to encumber it with seriousness, and, giving the rein to the brilliancy of youthful imagination, he scattered from his superabundant wealth the choicest flowers of fancy over the fairies' paths; his fairies move amidst the fragrance of enamelled meads, graceful, lovely, and enchanting. It is equally to Shakespeare's praise that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not more highly distinguished by the richness and variety, than for the propriety and harmony which characterizes the arrangement of the materials out of which he constructed this vivid and animated picture of fairy mythology.

THOMAS CAMPBELL: Addison says, "When I look at the tombs of departed greatness every emotion of envy dies within me." I have never been so sacrilegious as to envy Shakespeare, in the bad sense of the word, but if there can be such an emotion as sinless envy; I feel it toward him; and if I thought that the sight of his tombstone would kill so pleasant a feeling, I should keep out of the way of it. Of all his works, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* leaves the strongest im-

pression on my mind that this miserable world must have, for once at least, contained a happy man. This play is so purely delicious, so little intermixed with the painful passions from which Poetry distils her sterner sweets, so fragrant with hilarity, so bland and yet so bold, that I cannot imagine Shakespeare's mind to have been in any other frame than that of healthful ecstasy when the sparks of inspiration thrilled through his brain in composing it. I have heard, however, an old cold critic object that Shakespeare might have foreseen that it would never be a good acting play, for where could you get actors tiny enough to couch in flower blossoms? Well, I believe no manager was ever so fortunate as to get recruits from Fairyland, and yet I am told that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was some twenty years ago revived at Covent Garden, though altered, of course, not much for the better, by Reynolds, and that it had a run of eighteen nights—a tolerably good reception. But supposing that it never could have been acted, I should only thank Shakespeare the more that he wrote here as a poet and not as a playwright. And as a birth-off his imagination, whether it was to suit the stage or not, can we suppose the poet himself to have been insensible of its worth? Is a mother blind to the beauty of her child? No! nor could Shakespeare be unconscious that posterity would dote on this, one



of his loveliest children. How he must have chuckled and laughed in the act of placing the ass's head on Bottom's shoulders ! He must have tasted the mirth of nations unborn at Titania's doting on the metamorphosed weaver, and on his calling for a repast of sweet peas. His animal spirits must have bounded with the hunter's joy whilst he wrote Theseus's description of his well-tuned dogs and of the glory of the chase. He must have been as happy as Puck himself whilst he was describing the merry Fairy, and all this time he must have been self-assured that his genius "was to cast a girdle round the earth," and that souls, not yet in being, were to enjoy the revelry of his fancy.

HALLAM : The beautiful play of *Midsummer Night's Dream* evidently belongs to the earlier period of Shakespeare's genius ; poetical as we account it, more than dramatic, yet rather so, because the indescribable profusion of imaginative poetry in this play overpowers our senses till we can hardly observe anything else, than from any deficiency of dramatic excellence. For, in reality, the structure of the fable, consisting as it does of three if not four actions, very distinct in their subjects and personages, yet wrought into each other without effort or confusion, displays the skill, or rather instinctive felicity, of Shakespeare, as much as in any play he has written. No preceding dramatists had attempted to fabricate a complex plot ; for low comic

scenes, interspersed with a serious action upon which they have no influence, do not merit notice. The *Mænæchmi* of Plautus had been imitated by others, as well as Shakespeare; but we speak here of original invention.

The *Midsummer Night's Dream* is, I believe, altogether original in one of the most beautiful conceptions that ever visited the mind of a poet, the fairy machinery. A few before him had dealt in a vulgar and clumsy manner with popular superstition; but the sportive, beneficent, invisible population of the air and earth, long since established in the creed of childhood and of those simple as children, had never for a moment been blended with "human mortals" among the personages of the drama. The language of *Midsummer Night's Dream* is equally novel with the machinery. It sparkles with perpetual brightness with all the hues of the rainbow; yet there is nothing overcharged or affectedly ornamented. Perhaps no play of Shakespeare has fewer blemishes, or is from beginning to end in so perfect keeping: none in which so few lines could be erased or so few expressions blamed.

#### THE METRE OF THE PLAY

The Use of Prose and of Verse. — Both prose and verse are found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but

they are not used at random. Each has its purpose. In general, prose is employed by Shakespeare for humorous passages and for the conversation of vulgar characters, while verse is the medium of expression for the more elevated and poetical parts of the play. Thus Bottom and his friends regularly speak in prose, while the fairies and the lovers speak in verse. When prose and verse are used together, the conjunction is usually for the purpose of heightening a contrast either between the speakers, as in III., i., 128–200, where Bottom uses prose, and Titania, verse; or between the persons spoken to, as in V., i., 353–365, where Theseus addresses Bottom in prose and the lovers in verse. The variation in the mode of expression, when skilfully managed, contributes not a little to the general effect.

**Blank Verse.** — The verse generally used in Shakespeare's plays consist of ten-syllabled lines accented on every other syllable beginning with the second, and not rhymed. An example of such a line with the accents marked is :—

“Four nights / will quick / ly dream / away / the time.”

This verse is called unrhymed iambic pentameter — pentameter because the ten syllables in the line are divisible into five groups, or feet, as marked above; and iambic because each foot is an iamb, that is, a foot containing two syllables of which only the second

is accented. Other names for this kind of metre are blank verse and heroic verse.

**Variations.**— Since a succession of regular lines each containing five iambic feet would soon become tiresome, Shakespeare frequently substitutes another kind of foot for an iamb in order to give variety. Some of the feet that are thus substituted are: the trochee, which consists of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented; the pyrrhic, which consists of two unaccented syllables; and the spondee, which consists of two accented syllables. Thus I., i., 143:—

“Making/it mo/menta/ry as/a sound,”

we have a trochee in the first foot. An example of a pyrrhic in the first and third feet and of a spondee in the second foot may be seen in II., i., 99:—

“And the/quaint maz/es in/the wan/ton green.”

One whose ear is only ordinarily quick will find no difficulty in dividing into feet these lines that contain variations.

**Weak Endings.**— Another means of avoiding monotony which Shakespeare employs less frequently in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* than in his later plays is the addition of an unaccented syllable at the end of a line. An example is seen in III., ii., 215:—

“And will/you rent/our an/cient love/asun/der.”

This extra weak syllable is called a feminine ending.

**“Run-on” Lines.** — In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there is usually a distinct pause at the end of a line. Occasionally, however, the sense runs over from one line into the next, as in —

“And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things un-known ; the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothings  
A local habitation and a name.”

Such lines, which are called “run-on” in distinction from “end-stopped,” are much more common in the later plays. They give freedom and variety to the verse.

**The Fairy Verse.** — Much of the verse spoken by the fairies is trochaic. The lines vary in length, but are always short. A good example is a speech in III., ii., 110 ff. : —

“Cap'tain/of our/fairy/band  
Helen/a is/here at/hand  
And the/youth mis/took by/me  
Pleading/for a/lover's/fee.”

When the final syllable of the last foot is cut off, as it is here, the verse is called catalectic. Trochaic metre is commonly used by Shakespeare for the speech of his supernatural beings. The light tripping measures seem especially appropriate to the fairies.

**The Verse of the Interlude.** — The interlude played by Bottom and his friends is composed of iambic lines of various lengths. The stiffness and awkwardness that Shakespeare gave it in comparison with the other verse of the play should be observed.

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# **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

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THESEUS, *duke of Athens.*

EGEUS, *father to Hermia.*

LYSANDER, *betrothed to Hermia.*

DEMETRIUS, *once suitor to Helena, now in love with Hermia.*

PHILOSTRATE, *master of the revels to Theseus.*

QUINCE, *a carpenter,*

BOTTOM, *a weaver,*

FLUTE, *a bellows-mender,*

SNOUT, *a tinker,*

SNUG, *a joiner,*

STARVELING, *a tailor,*

*Performing in the interlude the parts of PROLOGUE, PYRAMUS,*

*THISBE, WALL, LION, MOONSHINE.*

HIPPOLYTA, *queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.*

HERMIA, *daughter to Egeus, betrothed to Lysander.*

HELENA, *in love with Demetrius.*

OBERON, *king of the fairies.*

TITANIA, *queen of the fairies.*

PUCK, *or Robin Goodfellow.*

PEASEBLOSSOM,	} <i>fairies.</i>
COBWEB,	
MOTH,	
MUSTARDSEED,	

Other fairies attending their King and Queen.

Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

SCENE: *Athens, and a wood near it.*

# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

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## ACT FIRST — SCENE I

*Athens. The palace of THESEUS*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants*

*The.* Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in  
Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow  
This old moon wanes! she lingers<sup>o</sup> my desires,  
Like to a step-dame or a dowager<sup>o</sup>  
Long withering out a young man's revenue.<sup>o</sup>

*Hip.* Four days will quickly steep themselves in  
night;  
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;  
And then the moon, like to a silver bow  
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night  
Of our solemnities.

*The.* Go, Philostrate,  
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;  
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth:  
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;  
The pale companion° is not for our pomp.

[*Exit PHILOSTRATE.*]

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,  
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;  
But I will wed thee in another key,  
With pomp, with triumph° and with revelling.

*Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS*

*Ege.* Happy be Theseus, our renowned Duke°! 20

*The.* Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

*Ege.* Full of vexation come I, with complaint  
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.  
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,  
This man hath my consent to marry her.  
Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious Duke,  
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:  
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes  
And interchang'd love-tokens with my child:  
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung 30  
With faining voice verses of faining° love,

And stolen the impression of her fantasy°  
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds,° conceits,  
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, — messengers  
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth:  
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,  
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,  
To stubborn harshness : and, my gracious Duke,  
Be° it so she will not here before your grace  
Consent to marry with Demetrius, 40  
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,°  
As she is mine, I may dispose of her :  
Which shall° be either to this gentleman  
Or to her death, according to our law  
Immediately provided in that case.

*The.* What say you, Hermia ? be advis'd, fair maid :  
To you your father should be as a god ;  
One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one  
To whom you are but as a form in wax  
By him imprinted and within his power 50  
To leave the figure or disfigure it.  
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

*Her.* So is Lysander.

*The.* In himself he is ;  
But in this kind,° wanting your father's voice,  
The other must be held the worthier.

*Her.* I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

*The.* Rather your eyes must with his judgement look.

*Her.* I do entreat your grace to pardon me.  
I know not by what power I am made bold,  
Nor how it may concern my modesty,<sup>o</sup>  
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts,  
But I beseech your grace that I may know  
The worst that may befall me in this case,  
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

60

*The.* Either to die the death<sup>o</sup> or to abjure  
For ever the society of men.  
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;  
Know of your youth,<sup>o</sup> examine well your blood,  
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,  
You can endure the livery of a nun,  
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,<sup>o</sup>  
To live a barren sister all your life,  
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.  
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,<sup>o</sup>  
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;  
But earthlier<sup>o</sup> happy is the rose distill'd,  
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn  
Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

70

*Her.* So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,



I am belov'd of° beauteous Hermia :  
Why should not I then prosecute my right ?  
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,  
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,  
And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,  
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,  
Upon this spotted° and inconstant man.

110

*The.* I must confess that I have heard so much,  
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke° thereof ;  
But, being over-full of self-affairs,°  
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come ;  
And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me,  
I have some private schooling for you both.  
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself°  
To fit your fancies to your father's will ;  
Or else the law of Athens yields you up —  
Which by no means we may extenuate° —  
To death, or to a vow of single life.  
Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love ?  
Demetrius and Egeus, go along :  
I must employ you in some business  
Against our nuptial and confer with you  
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.  
*Ege.* With duty and desire we follow you.

120

[*Exeunt all but* **LYSANDER** and **HERMIA.°**

*Lys.* How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?

How chance the roses there do fade so fast? 129

*Her.* Belike° for want of rain, which I could well  
Beteem° them from the tempest of my eyes.

*Lys.* Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth;  
But, either it was different in blood, —

*Her.* O cross! too high° to be enthrall'd to low.

*Lys.* Or else misgraffed° in respect of years, —

*Her.* O spite! too old to be engag'd to young:

*Lys.* Or else it stood upon° the choice of friends, —

*Her.* O hell°! to choose love by another's eyes. 140

*Lys.* Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,  
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,  
Making it momentary as a sound,  
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;  
Brief as the lightning in the collied° night,  
That, in a spleen,° unfolds both heaven and earth,  
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:  
So quick bright things come to confusion.°

*Her.* If then true lovers have been ever° cross'd 150  
It stands as an edict in destiny°:



Then let us teach our trial patience,  
Because it is a customary cross,  
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,  
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's<sup>o</sup> followers.

*Lys.* A good persuasion : therefore, hear me, *Hermia*.

I have a widow aunt, a dowager  
Of great revenue, and she hath no child :  
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues ;  
And she respects me as her only son. 160  
There, gentle *Hermia*, may I marry thee ;  
And to that place the sharp Athenian law  
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,  
Steal forth<sup>o</sup> thy father's house to-morrow night ;  
And in the wood, a league without the town,  
Where I did meet thee once with *Helena*,  
To do observance to a morn of May,<sup>o</sup>  
There will I stay for thee.

*Her.* My good *Lysander* !  
I swear to thee, by Cupid's<sup>o</sup> strongest bow,  
By his best arrow<sup>o</sup> with the golden head, 170  
By the simplicity of Venus'<sup>o</sup> doves,  
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,  
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,<sup>o</sup>  
When the false Trojan<sup>o</sup> under sail was seen,

By all the vows that ever men have broke,<sup>o</sup>  
In number more than ever women spoke,  
In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

*Lys.* Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

*Enter HELENA*

*Her.* God speed fair Helena! whither away? 180

*Hel.* Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.  
Demetrius loves your fair<sup>o</sup>: O happy fair!  
Your eyes are lode-stars<sup>o</sup>; and your tongue's sweet air  
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,  
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.  
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,  
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;  
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,  
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated,<sup>o</sup> 190  
The rest I'd give to be to you translated.  
O teach me how you look, and with what art  
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

*Her.* I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

*Hel.* O that your frowns would teach my smiles  
such skill!

*Her.* I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

*Hel.* O that my prayers could such affection move!

*Her.* The more I hate, the more he follows me.

*Hel.* The more I love, the more he hateth me.

*Her.* His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200

*Hel.* None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

*Her.* Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;  
Lysander and myself° will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see,  
Seem'd Athens like° a paradise to me:  
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,  
That he hath turn'd a heaven into a hell!

*Lys.* Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:  
To-morrow night, when Phœbe° doth behold  
Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass, 310  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,  
A time that lovers' flights doth still° conceal,  
'Through Athens' gate have we devis'd to steal.

*Her.* And in the wood, where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself° shall meet;  
And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,  
To seek new friends and stranger companies.

Farewell, sweet playfellow : pray thou for us ;     220  
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius !  
Keep word, Lysander : we must starve our sight.  
From lovers' food<sup>o</sup> till morrow deep midnight.

*Lys.* I will, my Hermia.     [*Exit HERMIA.*

Helena, adieu :

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you !     [*Exit.*

*Hel.* How happy some o'er other some<sup>o</sup> can be !  
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
But what of that ? Demetrius thinks not so ;  
He will not know what all but he do know :  
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,     230  
So I, admiring of his qualities :  
Things base and vile,<sup>o</sup> holding no quantity,  
Love can transpose to form and dignity :  
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind ;  
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind :  
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste<sup>o</sup> ;  
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy<sup>o</sup> haste :  
And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
Because in choice he often is beguil'd.<sup>o</sup>  
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,     240  
So the boy Love is perjur'd every where :  
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,<sup>o</sup>  
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine ;

And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,  
So he dissolv'd, and showers of oaths did melt.  
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight° :  
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night  
Pursue her ; and for this intelligence  
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense° :  
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,  
To have his sight thither and back again.

[Exit

## SCENE II

*Athens. QUINCE's house*

*Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and  
STARVELING*

*Quin.* Is all our company here ?

*Bot.* You were best to call them generally,° man by man, according to the scrip.°

*Quin.* Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit,° through all Athens, to play in our interlude° before the Duke and the Duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

*Bot.* First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow on to a point

*Quin.* Marry,° our play is, *The most lamentable° comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.*°

*Bot.* A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

*Quin.* Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

*Bot.* Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

*Quin.* You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

*Bot.* What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant°?

*Quin.* A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love.

*Bot.* That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole° in some measure. To the rest. Yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles° rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.°

“The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks  
Of prison gates;

And Phibbus'° car  
Shall shine from far  
And make and mar  
The foolish Fates.'°

This was lofty ! Now name the rest of the players.° 4:  
This is Eracles' vein, a tyrant's vein ; a lover is more  
condoling.

*Quin.* Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

*Flu.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* Flute, you must take 'Thisby on you.

*Flu.* What is 'Thisby ? a wand'ring knight ?

*Quin.* It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

*Flu.* Nay, faith, let not me play a woman ; I have  
a beard coming.°

*Quin.* That's all one : you shall play it in a mask,° 5:  
and you may speak as small as you will.

*Bot.* An° I may hide my face, let me play 'Thisby  
too, I'll speak in a monstrous little° voice, Listen, lis-  
ten ! " Ah Pyramus, my lover dear ! thy 'Thisby dear,  
and lady dear ! "

*Quin.* No, no ; you must play Pyramus : and, Flute,  
you 'Thisby.

*Bot.* Well, proceed.

*Quin.* Robin Starveling, the tailor.

*Star* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

*Snout.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quin.* You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father. Snug, the joiner, you, the lion's part; and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

*Snug.* Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

*Quin.* You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

*Bot.* Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the Duke say: "Let him roar again, let him roar again."

*Quin.* An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the Duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were<sup>o</sup> enough to hang us all.

*All.* That would hang us, every mother's son.

*Bot.* I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate<sup>o</sup> my voice so that I will roar you<sup>o</sup> as gently as any sucking<sup>o</sup> dove; I will roar an 'twere<sup>o</sup> any nightingale.

*Quin.* You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-fac'd man; a proper<sup>o</sup> man, as one



shall see in a summer's day ; a most lovely gentleman-like man : therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

*Bot.* Well, I will undertake it. What beard were° I best to play it in ?

*Quin.* Why, what you will.

*Bot.* I will discharge it in either your straw-colour° beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain° beard, or your French-crown-colour° beard, your perfect yellow.

*Quin.* Some of your French crowns° have no hair at all, and then you will play barefac'd. But, masters, here are your parts ; and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night ; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight ; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogg'd with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties,° such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not.

*Bot.* We will meet ; and there we may rehearse most obscenely° and courageously. Take pains ; be perfect : adieu.

*Quin.* At the Duke's oak we meet.

*Bot.* Enough ; hold or cut bow-strings.° [Exeunt.

## ACT SECOND — SCENE I

*A wood near Athens**Enter, f. om opposite sides, a Fairy, and PUCK**Puck.* How now, spirit! whither wander you?*Fai.* Over hill, over dale,

Thorough° bush, thorough brier,

Over park, over pale,°

Thorough flood, thorough fire,

I do wander every where,

Swifter than the moones° sphere;

And I serve the fairy queen,

To dew her orbs° upon the green.

The cowslips tall her pensioners° be:

xo

In their gold coats spots you see;

Those be rubies, fairy favours,

In those freckles live their savours:

I must go seek some dewdrops here

And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

Farewell, thou lob° of spirits; I'll be gone:

Our queen and all her elves come here anon.~

*Puck.* The King doth keep his revels here to-night;  
Take heed the Queen come not within his sight;

For Oberon is passing fell° and wrath, 20  
Because that she as her attendant hath  
A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king:  
She never had so sweet a changeling°;  
And jealous Oberon would have the child  
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;  
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,  
Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy:  
And now they never meet in grove or green,  
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen°,  
But they do square°, that all their elves for fear 30  
Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

*Fai.* Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
Or else you are that shrewd° and knavish sprite  
Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are you not he°  
That frights the maidens of the villagery;  
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern°;  
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;  
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm°;  
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm°?  
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck°, 40  
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:  
Are not you he?

*Puck.*                   Thou speak'st aright;  
I am that merry wanderer of the night.



When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land,  
And in the shape of Corin° sat all day,  
Playing on pipes of corn° and versing love  
To amorous Phillida.° Why art thou here,  
Come from the farthest steppe of India ?  
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,°  
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love, .  
To Theseus must° be wedded, and you come  
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

70

*Obe.* How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,  
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,  
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus ?  
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering  
night

From Perigouna,° whom he ravished ?  
And make him with fair Ægle break his faith,  
With Ariadne and Antiopa ?

80

*Tita.* These are the forgeries of jealousy :  
And never, since the middle summer's spring,  
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,  
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,  
Or in the beached margent of the sea,  
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.  
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
Contagious° fogs; which falling in the land     90  
Have every petty river made so proud  
That they have overborne their continents°:  
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,  
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn°  
Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;  
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,  
And crows are fatted with the murrain° flock;  
The nine men's morris° is fill'd up with mud,  
And the quaint mazes° in the wanton° green  
For lack of tread are undistinguishable:     100  
The human mortals° want their winter here;  
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:  
Therefore° the moon, the governess of floods,  
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
That° rheumatic diseases do abound:  
And thorough° this distemperature we see  
The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts  
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,  
And on old Hiems'° thin and icy crown  
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds     110  
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,  
The childing° autumn, angry winter, change  
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed° world,

By their increase, now knows not which is which :  
And this same progeny of evils comes  
From our debate, from our dissension ;  
We are their parents and original.°

*Obe.* Do you amend it then ; it lies in you° :  
Why should Titania cross her Oberon ?  
I do but beg a little changeling boy,  
To be my henchman.

120

*Tita.* Set your heart at rest :  
The fairy land buys not the child of me.  
His mother was a vot'ress° of my order  
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,  
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,  
And sat with me on Neptune's° yellow sands,  
Marking the embarked traders on the flood,  
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,  
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,  
To fetch me trifles, and return again,  
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.  
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,  
And for her sake I will not part with him.

130

*Obe.* How long within this wood intend you stay ?

*Tita.* Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.  
If you will patiently dance in our round  
And see our moonlight revels, go with us ;

If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

*Obe.* Give me that boy, and I will go with thee. 139

*Tita.* Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!  
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[*Exit TITANIA with her train.*

*Obe.* Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this  
grove

Till I torment thee for this injury.

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememb'rest  
Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back°  
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath  
That the rude sea grew civil at her song  
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,  
To hear the sea-maid's music?

*Puck.*

I remember.

150

*Obe.* That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,  
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took  
At a fair vestal° throned by the west,  
And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;  
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,  
And the imperial votaress° passed on,



In maiden meditation, fancy-free.<sup>o</sup> 160

Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell :

It fell upon a little western flower,

Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,

And maidens call it love-in-idleness.

Fetch me that flower ; the herb I shew'd thee once :

The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid

Will make or man or woman madly dote

Upon the next live creature that it sees.

Fetch me this herb ; and be thou here again

Ere the leviathan<sup>o</sup> can swim a league. 170

*Puck.* I'll put a girdle round about the earth  
In forty minutes. [Exit.

*Obe.* Having once this juice,

I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,

And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.

The next thing then she waking looks upon,

Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,

On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,

She shall pursue it with the soul of love :

And ere I take this charm from off her sight,

As I can take it with another herb, 180

I'll make her render up her page to me.

But who comes here ? I am invisible<sup>o</sup> ;

And I will overhear their conference.

*Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him*

*Dem.* I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.  
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia ?  
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.  
Thou told'st me they were stol'n<sup>o</sup> unto this wood ;  
And here am I, and wode<sup>o</sup> within this wood,  
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.  
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more. 190

*Hel.* You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant<sup>o</sup> ;  
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart  
Is true as steel : leave you your power to draw,  
And I shall have no power to follow you.

*Dem.* Do I entice you ? do I speak you fair ?  
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth  
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot<sup>o</sup> love you ?

*Hel.* And even for that do I love you the more.  
I am your spaniel ; and, Demetrius,  
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you : 200  
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,  
Neglect me, lose me ; only give me leave,  
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.  
What worser<sup>o</sup> place can I beg in your love, —  
And yet a place of high respect with me, —  
Than to be used as you use your dog ?

*Dem.* Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,  
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

*Hel.* And I am sick when I look not on you.

*Dem.* You do impeach<sup>o</sup> your modesty too much, 210  
To leave the city and commit yourself  
Into the hands of one that loves you not;  
To trust the opportunity of night  
And the ill counsel of a desert place  
With the rich worth of your virginity.

*Hel.* Your virtue is my privilege: for that  
It is not night when I do see your face,  
Therefore I think I am not in the night;  
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,  
For you in my respect<sup>o</sup> are all the world: 220  
Then how can it be said I am alone,  
When all the world is here to look on me?

*Dem.* I'll run from thee and hide me in the  
brakes,  
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

*Hel.* The wildest hath not such a heart as you.  
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd:  
Apollo<sup>o</sup> flies, and Daphne holds the chase;  
The dove pursues the griffin<sup>o</sup>; the mild hind  
Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed,  
When cowardice pursues and valour flies. 230

*Dem.* I will not stay thy questions; let me go:  
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe°  
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

*Hel.* Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,  
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!  
Your wrongs° do set a scandal on my sex:  
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;  
We should be woo'd and were not made to woo.

[*Exit* DEMETRIUS.

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell, 239  
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*

*Obe.* Fare thee well, nymph°: ere he do leave this  
grove,  
Thou shalt fly him and he shall seek thy love.

*Re-enter* PUCK

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

*Puck.* Ay, there it is.

*Obe.* I pray thee, give it me.  
I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips° and the nodding violet grows,  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,°  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine°:  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers° with dances and delight; 250

And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,  
Weed° wide enough to wrap a fairy in:  
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
And make her full of hateful fantasies.  
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:  
A sweet Athenian lady is in love  
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;  
But do it when the next thing he espies  
May be the lady: thou shalt know the man  
By the Athenian garments he hath on.  
Effect it with some care, that he may prove  
More fond on her than she upon her love:  
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

260

*Puck.* Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

[*Exeunt*

## SCENE II

*Another part of the wood*

*Enter TITANIA, with her train*

*Tita.* Come, now a roundel° and a fairy song;  
Then, for the third part of a minute,° hence;  
Some to kill cankers° in the musk-rose buds,  
Some war with rere-mice° for their leathern wings,

To make my small elves coats, and some keep back  
The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders  
At our quaint° spirits. Sing me now asleep;  
Then to your offices and let me rest.

*The Fairies sing*

You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;  
Newts° and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
Come not near our fairy queen.

10

*Cho.* Philomel°, with melody  
Sing in our sweet lullaby;  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:  
Never harm,  
Nor spell nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh;  
So, good night, with lullaby.

Weaving spiders, come not here;  
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!  
Beetles black, approach not near;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

20

*Cho.* Philomel, with melody, etc.

*A Fairy.* Hence, away! now all is well:  
One aloof stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies.* TITANIA sleeps.]

*Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on TITANIA's eyelids*

*Obe.* What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
Do it for thy true-love take,  
Love and languish for his sake:  
Be it ounce,<sup>o</sup> or cat,<sup>o</sup> or bear,  
Pard<sup>o</sup> or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear:  
Wake when some vile thing is near. [Exit.

*Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA*

*Lys.* Fair love, you faint with wand'ring in the  
wood;

And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

*Her.* Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;  
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

*Lys.* One turf shall serve as pillow for us both:  
One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.<sup>o</sup>

*Her.* Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,  
Lie further, yet; do not lie so near.

*Lys.* O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!  
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.°

I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit  
So that but one heart you can make of it;  
Two bosoms interchained with an oath;  
So then two bosoms and a single troth.

50

Then by your side no bed-room me deny;  
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

*Her.* Lysander riddles very prettily:  
Now much beshrew° my manners and my pride,  
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.

But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy  
Lie further off; in human modesty,  
Such separation as may well be said  
Becomes° a virtuous bachelor and a maid,  
So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend.  
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

60

*Lys.* Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;  
And then end life when I end loyalty!  
Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

*Her.* With half that wish the wisher's eyes be°  
press'd!

[*They sleep.*]

D



*Enter PUCK*

*Puck.* Through the forest have I gone,  
But Athenian found I none,  
On whose eyes I might approve°  
This flower's force in stirring love.  
Night and silence, — Who is here? 70  
Weeds° of Athens he doth wear:  
This is he, my master said,  
Despised the Athenian maid;  
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,  
On the dank and dirty ground.  
Pretty soul! she durst not lie  
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.  
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
All the power this charm doth owe.°  
When thou wak'st, let love forbid° 80  
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:  
So awake when I am gone;  
For I must now to Oberon.

[*Exit.*]*Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running*

*Hel.* Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

*Dem.* I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me  
thus.

*Hel.* O, wilt thou darkling° leave me? do not so.

*Dem.* Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go.     [*Exit.*

*Hel.* O, I am out of breath in this fond° chase!

The more my prayer, the lesser° is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies;     90

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear:

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster,° fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery° eyne?

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!     100

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

*Lys.* [*Awaking.*] And run through fire I will for  
thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows° her art,

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word

Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

*Hel.* Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.

What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what  
though?

Yet Hermia still loves you : then be content. 110

*Lys.* Content with Hermia ! No ; I do repent  
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.  
Not Hermia but Helen now I love :  
Who will not change a raven for a dove ?  
The will of man is by his reason sway'd ;  
And reason says you are the worthier maid.  
Things growing are not ripe<sup>o</sup> until their season :  
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason ;  
And touching now the point of human skill,  
Reason becomes the marshal to my will 120  
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook  
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

*Hel.* Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born ?  
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn ?  
Is't not enough, is't not enough,<sup>o</sup> young man,  
That I did never, no, nor never can,  
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,  
But you must flout<sup>o</sup> my insufficiency ?  
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth you do,  
In such disdainful manner me to woo. 130  
But fare you well : perforce I must confess  
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.  
O, that a lady, of<sup>o</sup> one man refus'd,  
Should of another therefore be abus'd ! [Exit.

*Lys.* She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou  
there;

**And never mayst thou come Lysander near°!**

For as a surfeit of the sweetest things

**The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,**

Or as the heresies that men do leave

Are hated most of those they did deceive, 140

So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,

Of all be hated, but the most of me !

And, all my powers, address your love and might

To honour Helen and to be her knight. [Exit.

*Her.* [*Awaking.*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do  
thy best

**To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast !**

**Ay me for pity ! what a dream was here !**

**Lysander**, look how I do quake with fear:

**Methought a serpent eat° my heart away,**

And you sat smiling at his cruel prey. 150

**Lysander!** what, remov'd? **Lysander!** lord!

What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?

**Alack, where are you? speak, an if<sup>o</sup> you hear;**

Speak, of all loves ! I swoon almost with fear.

No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:

**Either death or you I'll find immediately. [Exit.**

## ACT THIRD — SCENE I

*The wood. TITANIA lying asleep*

*Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and  
STARVELING*

*Bot.* Are we all met?

*Quin.* Pat, pat°; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake° our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke.

*Bot.* Peter Quince, —

*Quin.* What say'st thou, bully Bottom°?

*Bot.* There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please.° First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

*Snout.* By'r lakin,° a parlous fear.

*Star.* I believe we must have the killing out, when all is done.

*Bot.* Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords and that

Pyramus is not kill'd indeed; and, for the more better<sup>o</sup> assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

*Quin.* Well, we will have such a prologue<sup>o</sup>; and it shall be written in eight and six.<sup>o</sup>

*Bot.* No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

*Snout.* Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

*Star.* I fear it, I promise you.

*Bot.* Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in — God shield us! — a lion among <sup>30</sup> ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to't.

*Snout.* Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

*Bot.* Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,<sup>o</sup> — Ladies, — or Fair ladies, — I would wish you, — or I would request you, — or I would en- <sup>40</sup> treat you, — not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life<sup>o</sup>: no, I am no such thing; I am a man

as other men are; and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

*Quin.* Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

*Snout.* Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

*Bot.* A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

*Quin.* Yes, it doth shine that night.

*Bot.* Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement.

*Quin.* Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to disfigure,<sup>o</sup> or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

*Snout.* You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

*Bot.* Some man or other must present Wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him

hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

76

*Quin.* If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to his cue.°

*Enter PUCK behind*

*Puck.* What hempen home-spuns° have we swaggering here,  
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?  
What, a play toward°! I'll be an auditor;  
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause.

*Quin.* Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

80

*Bot.* "Thisby, the flowers of odious° savours sweet," —

*Quin.* Odours, odours.

*Bot.* — "odours savours sweet:

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.  
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,  
And by and by I will to thee appear."

[*Exit.*

*Puck.* A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here.

[*Exit.*

*Flu.* Must I speak now?



*Quin.* Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

*Flu.* "Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,  
Most brisky juvenal° and eke° most lovely Jew,

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,  
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb."

*Quin.* "Ninus' tomb," man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, "never tire."

*Flu.* O, — "As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire."

*Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head*

*Bot.* "If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine."

*Quin.* O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted.  
Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

[*Exeunt* QUINCE, SNUG, FLUTE, SNOUT, and  
STARVELING.

*Puck.* I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,  
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through  
brier:

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,  
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;  
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, 110  
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. [*Exit.*

*Bot.* Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afraid.

*Re-enter* SNOUT

*Snout.* O Bottom, thou art chang'd! what do I see on thee?

*Bot.* What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? [*Exit* SNOUT.

*Re-enter* QUINCE

*Quin.* Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated.° [*Exit.*

*Bot.* I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of 120  
me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. [*Sings.*

The ousel° cock so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle° with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill, —

*Tita.* [*Awaking.*] What angel wakes me from my  
flow'ry bed?

*Bot.* [*Sings.*]  
The finch, the sparrow and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer nay; —

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a  
bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry  
“cuckoo” never so?

*Tita.* I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:  
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note  
So is mine eye enthralled° to thy shape;  
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me  
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

*Bot.* Methinks, mistress, you should have little  
reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and  
love keep little company together now-a-days; the  
more the pity that some honest neighbours will not  
make them friends. Nay, I can glee° upon occasion.

*Tita.* Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

*Bot.* Not so, neither°: but if I had wit enough to  
get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own  
turn.

*Tita.* Out of this wood do not desire to go:  
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.  
I am a spirit of no common rate:  
The summer still doth tend upon my state;  
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;  
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,  
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,  
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:  
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so  
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go. 160  
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!

*Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTE, and MUSTARD-  
SEED*

*Peas.* Ready.

*Cob.*             And I.

*Moth.*             And I.

*Mus.*                     And I.

*All.*                             Where shall we go?

*Tita.* Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;  
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;  
Feed him with apricocks<sup>o</sup> and dewberries,  
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;  
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,  
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs

And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,  
To have my love to bed and to arise;  
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies  
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:  
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

*Peas.* Hail, mortal!

*Cob.* Hail!

*Moth.* Hail!

*Mus.* Hail!

*Bot.* I cry your worship's mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

*Cob.* Cobweb.

*Bot.* I shall desire you of more acquaintance,° good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. Your name, honest gentleman?

*Peas.* Peaseblossom.

*Bot.* I pray you commend me to Mistress Squash,° your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir?

*Mus.* Mustardseed.

*Bot.* Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house; I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water

ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

*Tita.* Come, wait upon him ; lead him to my bower.

The moon methinks looks with a wat'ry eye ;

And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,

Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.° [*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II

*Another part of the wood*

*Enter OBERON*

*Obe.* I wonder if Titania be awak'd ;

Then, what it was that next came in her eye,

Which she must dote on in extremity.°

*Enter PUCK*

Here comes my messenger.

How now, mad spirit !

What night-rule° now about this haunted grove ?

*Puck.* My mistress with a monster is in love.

Near to her close and consecrated bower,

While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,

A crew of patches,° rude mechanicals,°

That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 1c  
Were met together to rehearse a play  
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.  
The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort,<sup>o</sup>  
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport  
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake:  
When I did him at this advantage take,  
An ass's nowl<sup>o</sup> I fixed on his head:  
Anon his Thisby must be answered,  
And forth my mimic<sup>o</sup> comes. When they him spy,  
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 2c  
Or russet-pated choughs,<sup>o</sup> many in sort,  
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky.  
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;  
And, at our stamp,<sup>o</sup> here o'er and o'er one falls;  
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.  
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus  
strong,  
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;  
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch;  
Some sleeves, some hats; from yielders<sup>o</sup> all things  
catch. 3c  
I led them on in this distracted fear,  
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:

When in that moment, so it came to pass,  
Titania wak'd and straightway lov'd an ass.

*Obe.* This falls out better than I could devise.  
But hast thou yet latch'd° the Athenian's eyes  
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do ?

*Puck.* I took him sleeping, — that is finish'd too, —  
And the Athenian woman by his side ;  
That, when he wak'd, of force° she must be ey'd.     40

*Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.*

*Obe.* Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

*Puck.* This is the woman, but not this the man.

*Dem.* O, why rebuke you him that loves you so ?  
Lay breath° so bitter on your bitter foe.

*Her.* Now I but chide ; but I should use thee worse,  
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.  
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,  
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,  
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day  
As he to me: would he have stolen away  
From sleeping Hermia ? I'll believe as soon  
This whole earth may be bor'd and that the moon  
May through the centre creep and so displease  
Her brother's° noontide with the Antipodes.°     50



It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;  
So should a murderer look, so dead,<sup>o</sup> so grim.

*Dem.* So should the murder'd look, and so should I,  
Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty:  
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60  
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.<sup>o</sup>

*Her.* What's this to my Lysander? where is he?  
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

*Dem.* I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

*Her.* Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the  
bounds

Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?  
Henceforth be never number'd among men!  
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!  
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,  
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch! 70  
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?  
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue  
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

*Dem.* You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood<sup>o</sup>.  
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;  
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

*Her.* I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

*Dem.* An if I could, what should I get therefore?

*Her.* A privilege never to see me more.

And from thy hated presence part I so : 80  
See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [Exit.

*Dem.* There is no following her in this fierce vein :  
Here, therefore, for a while I will remain.  
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow  
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe ;  
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,  
If for his tender here I make some stay.°

[Lies down and sleeps.

*Obe.* What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken  
quite

And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight :  
Of thy misprision° must perforce ensue 90  
Some true love turn'd° and not a false turn'd true.

*Puck.* Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding  
troth,  
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.°

*Obe.* About the wood go swifter than the wind,  
And Helena of Athens look thou find :  
All fancy-sick° she is and pale of cheer,  
With sighs of love, that costs° the fresh blood dear :  
By some illusion see thou bring her here :  
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

*Puck.* I go, I go; look how I go, 100  
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's° bow. [Exit.

*Obe.* Flower of this purple dye,  
Hit with Cupid's archery.  
Sink in apple of his eye.  
When his love he doth espy,  
Let her shine as gloriously  
As the Venus of the sky.<sup>o</sup>  
When thou wak'st, if she be by,  
Beg of her for remedy.

*Re-enter Puck*

*Puck.* Captain of our fairy band,  
Helena is here at hand;  
And the youth, mistook by me,  
Pleading for a lover's fee.  
Shall we their fond pageant see?  
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

110

*Obe.* Stand aside: the noise they make  
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

*Puck.* Then will two at once woo one;  
That must needs be sport alone<sup>o</sup>;  
And those things do best please me  
That befall preposterously.

120

*Enter LYSANDER and HELENA*

*Lys.* Why should you think that I should woo in  
scorn?

Scorn and derision never come in tears :  
Look, when I vow, I weep ; and vows so born,  
In their nativity all truth appears.°  
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,  
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true ?

*Hel.* You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray !  
These vows are Hermia's : will you give her o'er ? 130

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh :  
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,  
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.°

*Lys.* I had no judgement when to her I swore.

*Hel.* Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

*Lys.* Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

*Dem.* [*Awaking.*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine !

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne ?  
Crystal is muddy.° O, how ripe in show  
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow ! 140  
That pure congealed white, high Taurus'° snow,  
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow  
When thou hold'st up thy hand : O, let me kiss  
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss !

*Hel.* O spite ! O hell ! I see you all are bent  
To set against me for your merriment :

If you were civil and knew courtesy,  
You would not do me thus much injury.  
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,  
But you must join in souls to mock me too ?  
If you were men, as men you are in show,  
You would not use a gentle lady so ;  
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,  
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.  
You both are rivals, and love Hermia ;  
And now both rivals, to mock Helena :  
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,  
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes  
With your derision ! none of noble sort  
Would so offend a virgin and extort°  
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

150

16a

*Lys.* You are unkind, Demetrius ; be not so ;  
For you love Hermia ; this you know I know :  
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,  
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part ;  
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,  
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

*Hel.* Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

*Dem.* Lysander, keep thy Hermia ; I will none :  
If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone.  
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,

17c

And now to Helen is it home return'd,  
There to remain.

*Lys.*                     Helen, it is not so.

*Dem.* Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,  
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby° it dear.  
Look, where thy love comes ; yonder is thy dear.

*Re-enter HERMIA*

*Her.* Dark night, that from the eye his function  
takes,

The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;  
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
It pays the hearing double recompense.

180

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found ;  
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.  
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so ?

*Lys.* Why should he stay, whom love doth press to  
go ?

*Her.* What love could press Lysander from my  
side ?

*Lys.* Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,  
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night  
Than all yon fiery oes° and eyes of light.  
Why seek'st thou me ? could not this make thee know,  
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so ?

190

*Her.* You speak not as you think : it cannot be.

*Hel.* Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three

To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.

Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!

Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd  
To bait me with this foul derision?

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,

The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,

When we have chid the hasty-footed time

200

For parting us, — O, is it all forgot?

All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,

Have with our needles created both one flower,

Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,

Both warbling of one song, both in one key,

As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,

Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,

But yet an union in partition;

210

Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;

So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;

Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,

Due but to one and crowned with one crest.

And will you rent<sup>o</sup> our ancient love asunder,

To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?  
It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly :  
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,  
Though I alone do feel the injury.

*Her.* I am amazed at your passionate words. 220  
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

*Hel.* Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,  
To follow me and praise my eyes and face ?  
And made your other love, Demetrius,  
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,  
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,  
Precious, celestial ? Wherefore speaks he this  
To her he hates ? and wherefore doth Lysander  
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,  
And tender me, forsooth, affection, 230  
But by your setting on, by your consent ?  
What though I be not so in grace as you,  
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,  
But miserable most, to love unlov'd ?  
This you should pity rather than despise.

*Her.* I understand not what you mean by this.

*Hel.* Ay, do, persever,<sup>o</sup> counterfeit sad looks,  
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back ;  
Wink each at other ; hold the sweet jest up :  
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled.



If you have any pity, grace, or manners,  
You would not make me such an argument.  
But fare ye well : 'tis partly my own fault ;  
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

*Lys.* Stay, gentle Helena ; hear my excuse :  
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena !

*Hel.* O excellent !

*Her.* Sweet, do not scorn her so.

*Dem.* If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

*Lys.* Thou canst compel no more than she entreat :  
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak  
prayers. 250

Helen, I love thee ; by my life I do :  
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,  
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

*Dem.* I say I love thee more than he can do.

*Lys.* If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

*Dem.* Quick, come !

*Her.* Lysander, whereto tends all this ?

*Lys.* Away, you Ethiop<sup>e</sup> !

*Dem.* No, no ; he'll . . .

Seem to break loose ; take on as you would follow,  
But yet come not : you are a tame man, go !

*Lys.* Hang off, thou cat, thou burr<sup>o</sup> ! vile thing, let  
loose, 260

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

*Her.* Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?

Sweet love, —

*Lys.* Thy love! out, tawny Tartar,<sup>o</sup> out!

Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

*Her.* Do you not jest?

*Hel.* Yes, sooth; and so do you.

*Lys.* Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

*Dem.* I would I had your bond, for I perceive  
A weak bond<sup>o</sup> holds you: I'll not trust your word.

*Lys.* What<sup>o</sup>? Should I hurt her, strike her, kill her  
dead?

Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 270

*Her.* What, can you do me greater harm than  
hate?

Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!

Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?

I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left  
me:

Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—

In earnest, shall I say?

*Lys.* Ay, by my life;

And never did desire to see thee more.

Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt ;  
Be certain, nothing truer ; 'tis no jest  
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

280

*Her.* O me ! you juggler ! you canker-blossom° !  
You thief of love ! what, have you come by night  
And stol'n my love's heart from him ?

*Hel.*

Fine, i' faith !

Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,  
No touch of bashfulness ? What, will you tear  
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue ?  
Fie, fie ! you counterfeit, you puppet,° you !

*Her.* Puppet ? why so ? ay, that way goes the game.  
Now I perceive that she hath made compare  
Between our statures ; she hath urg'd her height ;  
And with her personage, her tall personage,  
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.  
And are you grown so high in his esteem,  
Because I am so dwarfish and so low ?  
How low am I, thou painted° maypole ? speak ;  
How low am I ? I am not yet so low  
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

290

*Hel.* I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,

Let her not hurt me : I was never curst° ;  
I have no gift at all in shrewishness ;

300

I am a right<sup>o</sup> maid for my cowardice :  
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,  
Because she is something lower than myself,  
That I can match her.

*Her.* Lower ! hark, again.

*Hel.* Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.  
I evermore did love you, Hermia.  
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you ;  
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,  
I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310  
He follow'd you ; for love I follow'd him ;  
But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me  
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too :  
And now, so you will let me quiet go,  
To Athens will I bear my folly back  
And follow you no further : let me go :  
You see how simple and how fond<sup>o</sup> I am.

*Her.* Why, get you gone : who is't that hinders you ?

*Hel.* A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

*Her.* What, with Lysander ?

*Hel.* With Demetrius. 320

*Lys.* Be not afraid ; she shall not harm thee,  
Helena.

*Dem.* No, sir, she shall not, though you take her  
part.

*Hel.* O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd !  
She was a vixen° when she went to school ;  
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

*Her.* Little again ! nothing but low and little !  
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus ?  
Let me come to her.

*Lys.* Get you gone, you dwarf ;  
You minimus,° of hindering knot-grass° made ;  
You bead, you acorn.

*Dem.* You are too officious 330  
In her behalf that scorns your services.  
Let her alone : speak not of Helena ;  
Take not her part ; for, if thou dost intend  
Never so little show of love to her,  
Thou shalt aby° it.

*Lys.* Now she holds me not ;  
Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,  
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

*Dem.* Follow ! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by  
jowl.° [Exeunt *LYSANDER* and *DEMETRIUS*.]

*Her.* You, mistress, all this coil° is 'long of you :  
Nay, go not back.

*Hel.* I will not trust you, I, 340  
Nor longer stay in your curst company.  
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,

My legs are longer though, to run away.     *[Exit.*

*Her.* I am amaz'd, and know not what to say.

*[Exit.*

*Obe.* This is thy negligence: still° thou mistak'st,  
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

*Puck.* Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.

Did not you tell me I should know the man

By the Athenian garment he had on?

And so far blameless proves my enterprise,     350

That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;

And so far am I glad it so did sort°

As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

*Obe.* Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to  
fight:

Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;

The starry welkin cover thou anon

With drooping fog as black as Acheron,°

And lead these testy rivals so astray

As one come not within another's way.

Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue,     360

Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong;

And sometime rail thou like Demetrius;

And from each other look thou lead them thus,

Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep

With leaden legs and batty° wings doth creep.

Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;  
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,  
To take from thence all error with his might,  
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.  
When they next wake, all this derision  
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,  
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,  
With league whose date till death shall never end.  
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,  
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy ;  
And then I will her charmed eye release  
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

370

*Puck.* My fairy lord, this must be done with  
haste,

For night's swift dragons° cut the clouds full fast,  
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger° ;  
At whose approach, ghosts, wand'ring here and there  
Troop home to churchyards : damned spirits all  
That in crossways° and floods have burial,  
Already to their wormy beds are gone ;  
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,  
They wilfully themselves exile from light  
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

380

*Obe.* But we are spirits of another sort :  
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,°

And, like a forester, the groves may tread, 390  
Even till the eastern gate,° all fiery-red,  
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,  
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams  
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay :  
We may effect this business yet ere day. [Exit.

*Puck.* Up and down, up and down,  
I will lead them up and down :  
I am fear'd in field and town :  
Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one. 400

*Re-enter* LYSANDER

*Lys.* Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak  
thou now.

*Puck.* Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art  
thou?

*Lys.* I will be with thee straight.

*Puck.* Follow me, then,  
To plainer ground.

[Exit LYSANDER, as following the voice.

*Re-enter* DEMETRIUS

*Dem.* Lysander! speak again :  
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?



Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

*Puck.* Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,  
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,  
And wilt not come? Come, recreant<sup>o</sup>; come, thou  
child;

I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defil'd  
That draws a sword on thee. 410

*Dem.* Yea, art thou there?

*Puck.* Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here.  
[*Exeunt.*]

*Re-enter* LYSANDER

*Lys.* He goes before me and still dares me on:  
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.  
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:  
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;  
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,  
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou  
gentle day!  
For if but once thou show me thy grey light, 419  
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.*]

*Re-enter* PUCK and DEMETRIUS

*Puck.* Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why com'st thou not?

*Dem.* Abide me, if thou dar'st; for well I wot<sup>o</sup>

Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,  
And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.  
Where art thou now ?

*Puck.*                                Come hither ; I am here.

*Dem.* Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt  
buy this dear,

If ever I thy face by daylight see :  
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me  
To measure out my length on this cold bed.  
By day's approach look to be visited.

430

*[Lies down and sleeps.]*

*Re-enter HELENA*

*Hel.* O weary night, O long and tedious night,  
Abate thy hours ! Shine comforts from the east,  
That I may back to Athens by daylight,  
From these that my poor company detest :  
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,  
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

*[Lies down and sleeps.]*

*Puck.* Yet but three ? Come one more ;  
Two of both kinds makes up four.  
Here she comes, curst° and sad :  
Cupid is a knavish lad,  
Thus to make poor females mad.

440

*Re-enter HERMIA*

*Her.* Never so weary, never so in woe,  
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,  
I can no further crawl, no further go ;  
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.  
Here will I rest me till the break of day.  
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray !

*[Lies down and sleeps.]*

*Puck.* On the ground  
Sleep sound :  
I'll apply  
To your eye,

450

Gentle lover, remedy.

*[Squeezing the juice on LYSANDER'S eyes.]*

When thou wak'st,  
Thou tak'st  
True delight  
In the sight

Of thy former lady's eye :  
And the country proverb known,  
That every man should take his own,  
In your waking shall be shown :

460

Jack shall have Jill ;  
Nought shall go ill ;

The man shall have his mare again,° and all shall be well. [*Exit.*

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ACT FOURTH — SCENE I

*The same.*    LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and  
HERMIA, *lying asleep.*

*Enter* TITANIA and BOTTOM ; PEASEBLOSSOM, COB-  
WEB, MOTH, MUSTARDSEED, and other Fairies at-  
tending ; OBERON behind unseen

*Tita.* Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,°  
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

*Bot.* Where's Peaseblossom ?

*Peas.* Ready.

*Bot.* Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's  
Mounsieur Cobweb ?

*Cob.* Ready.

*Bot.* Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you 10  
your weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipp'd  
humble-bee on the top of a thistle ; and, good moun-  
sieur, bring me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself

too much in the action, mounsieur; and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag break not; I would be loath to have you overflown with a honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur Mustardseed?

*Mus.* Ready.

*Bot.* Give me your neif,<sup>o</sup> Mounsieur Mustardseed. Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsieur.

*Mus.* What's your will?

*Bot.* Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery<sup>o</sup> Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me, I must scratch.

*Tita.* What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

*Bot.* I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones.<sup>o</sup>

*Tita.* Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

*Bot.* Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay<sup>o</sup>: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

*Tita.* I have a venturous<sup>o</sup> fairy that shall seek The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

*Bot.* I had rather have a handful or two of dried

peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me : I have an exposition° of sleep come upon me.

*Tita.* Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. 40  
Fairies, be gone, and be awhile away. [*Exeunt Fairies.*  
So doth the woodbine° the sweet honeysuckle  
Gently entwist ; the female ivy° so  
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.  
O, how I love thee ! how I dote on thee ! [*They sleep.*

*Enter Puck*

*Obe.* [*Advancing.*] Welcome, good Robin. See'st  
thou this sweet sight ?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity :  
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,  
Seeking sweet favours from this hateful fool,  
I did upbraid her and fall out with her ;  
For she his hairy temples then had rounded 50  
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers ;  
And that same dew, which sometimes on the buds  
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,  
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes  
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.  
When I had at my pleasure taunted her  
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,  
I then did ask of her her changeling child ;

Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent 6a  
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.  
And now I have the boy, I will undo  
This hateful imperfection of her eyes :  
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp  
From off the head of this Athenian swain ;  
That, he awaking when the other do,  
May all to Athens back again repair,  
And think no more of this night's accidents  
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.  
But first I will release the fairy queen. 70

*[Touching her eyes.*

Be as thou wast wont to be ;  
See as thou wast wont to see :  
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's<sup>o</sup> flower  
Hath such force and blessed power.

Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet queen.

*Tita.* My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !  
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

*Obe.* There lies your love.

*Tita.* How came these things to pass ?  
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now !

*Obe.* Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head. 8a  
Titania, music call ; and strike more dead  
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

*Tita.* Music, ho! music, such as charmeth sleep!

*Puck.* Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own  
fool's eyes peep.

*Obe.* Sound, music! [*Still music.*] Come, my  
queen, take hands with me,

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity

And will to-morrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly

And bless it to all fair posterity:

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

*Puck.* Fairy king, attend, and mark:

I do hear the morning lark.

*Obe.* Then, my queen, in silence sad,

Trip we after the night's shade:

We the globe can compass soon,

Swifter than the wand'ring moon.

*Tita.* Come, my lord, and in our flight

Tell me how it came this night

That I sleeping here was found

With these mortals on the ground.

[*Exeunt. Horns winded within*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train*

*The.* Go, one of you, find out the forester;



For now our observation is perform'd ;  
And since we have the vaward° of the day,  
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.  
Uncouple° in the western valley ; let them go :  
Despatch, I say, and find the forester.

[*Exit an Attendant.*

We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top  
And mark the musical confusion 110  
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

*Hip.* I was with Hercules° and Cadmus° once,  
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd° the bear  
With hounds of Sparta : never did I hear  
Such gallant chiding ; for, besides the groves,  
The skies, the fountains, every region near  
Seem'd all one mutual cry : I never heard  
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

*The.* My hounds are bred out of the Spartan  
kind,  
So flew'd,° so sanded,° and their heads are hung 120  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ;  
Crook-knee'd and dew-lapp'd° like Thessalian bulls ;  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,°  
Each under each. A cry more tuneable  
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly :

Judge when 'you hear. But, soft! what nymphs are these?

*Ege.* My lord, this is my daughter here asleep,  
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;  
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:  
I wonder of their being here together.

130

*The.* No doubt they rose up early to observe  
The rite of May,<sup>o</sup> and, hearing our intent,  
Came here in grace of our solemnity.  
But speak, Egeus; is this not the day  
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

*Ege.* It is, my lord.

*The.* Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their  
horns.

[*Horns and shout within.* LYS., DEM., HEL., and  
HER. wake and start up.

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:  
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now<sup>o</sup>?

140

*Lys.* Pardon, my lord.

*The.* I pray you all, stand up.

I know you two are rival enemies:  
How comes this gentle concord in the world,  
That hatred is so far from jealousy,  
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

*Lys.* My lord, I shall reply amazedly,

Half sleep, half waking : but as yet, I swear,  
I cannot truly say how I came here ;  
But, as I think, — for truly would I speak,  
And now do I bethink me, so it is, — 150  
I came with Hermia hither : our intent  
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might be  
Without the peril of the Athenian law —

*Ege.* Enough, enough, my lord ; you have enough :  
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.  
They would have stol'n away ; they would, Deme-  
trius,

Thereby to have defeated you and me,  
You of your wife and me of my consent,  
Of my consent that she should be your wife. 159

*Dem.* My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,  
Of this their purpose hither to this wood ;  
And I in fury hither follow'd them,  
Fair Helena in fancy following me.  
But, my good lord, I wot° not by what power, —  
But by some power it is, — my love to Hermia,  
Melted as melts° the snow, seems to me now  
As the remembrance of an idle gaud°  
Which in my childhood I did dote upon ;  
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,  
The object and the pleasure of mine eye, 170

Is only Helena. To her, my lord,  
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:  
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;  
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,  
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,  
And will for evermore be true to it.

*The.* Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:  
Of this discourse we shall hear more anon.<sup>o</sup>

Egeus, I will overbear your will;  
For in the temple, by and by, with us  
These couples shall eternally be knit:  
And, for<sup>o</sup> the morning now is something worn,  
Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.  
Away with us to Athens; three and three,  
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.  
Come, Hippolyta.

182

[*Exeunt THE., HIP., EGE., and train.*

*Dem.* These things seem small and undistinguish-  
able,  
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

*Her.* Methinks I see these things with parted eye,<sup>o</sup>  
When every thing seems double.

*Hel.* So methinks: 190  
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,<sup>o</sup>  
Mine own, and not mine own.

*Dem.* Are you sure that we're awake? It seems to me

That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think  
The Duke was here, and bid us follow him?

*Her.* Yea; and my father.

*Hel.* And Hippolyta.

*Lys.* And he did bid us follow to the temple.

*Dem.* Why, then, we are awake: let's follow him;  
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt.*

*Bot.* [*Awaking.*] When my cue comes, call me,;  
and I will answer: my next is, "Most fair Pyramus." Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my<sup>o</sup> life, stol'n hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patch'd fool,<sup>o</sup> if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard,<sup>o</sup> the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream,

because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of our play, before the Duke: peradventure to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her° death. [Exit.

## SCENE II

*Athens. QUINCE's house*

*Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING*

*Quin.* Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

*Star.* He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.°

*Flu.* If he come not, then the play is marr'd: it goes not forward, doth it?

*Quin.* It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

*Flu.* No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens.°

*Snout.* Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

*Flu.* You must say "paragon": a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.°

*Enter* SNUG

*Snug.* Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

*Flu.* O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day<sup>o</sup> during his life; he could not have 20  
'scaped sixpence a day: an the Duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hang'd; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

*Enter* BOTTOM

*Bot.* Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

*Quin.* Bottom! O most courageous<sup>o</sup> day! O most happy hour!

*Bot.* Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. 30  
I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

*Quin.* Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

*Bot.* Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings<sup>o</sup> to your beards, new ribbons to

your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath<sup>o</sup>; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go, away! *[Exeunt.]*

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## ACT FIFTH — SCENE I

*Athens. The Palace of THESEUS*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords,  
and Attendants*

*Hip.* 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

*The.* More strange than true: I never may believe These antique fables, nor these fairy toys. Lovers and madmen have such seething brains, Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend More than cool reason ever comprehends.



The lunatic, the lover and the poet°  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, 10  
Sees Helen's° beauty in a brow of Egypt°:  
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to  
heaven;

And as imagination bodies forth°  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.

Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy; 20  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear° !

*Hip.* But all the story of the night told over.  
And all their minds transfigur'd so together,  
More witnesseth than fancy's images  
And grows to something of great constancy,  
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

*The.* Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.



*The.* We'll none of that: that have I told my love,  
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

*Lys.* "The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,<sup>o</sup>  
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."

*The.* That is an old device; and it was play'd 50  
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

*Lys.* "The thrice three muses<sup>o</sup> mourning for the  
death

Of Learning, late deceas'd in beggary."

*The.* That is some satire, keen and critical,  
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

*Lys.* "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus  
And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth."

*The.* Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!  
That is, hot ice and wonderous strange snow.  
How shall we find the concord of this discord? 60

*Phil.* A play there is, my lord, some ten words  
long,

Which is as brief as I have known a play;  
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,  
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play  
There is not one word apt, one player fitted<sup>o</sup>:  
And tragical, my noble lord, it is;  
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.  
Which, when I saw rehears'd, I must confess,

Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears  
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

70

*The.* What are they that do play it?

*Phil.* Hard-handed men that work in Athens  
here,

Which never labour'd in their minds till now,  
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd° memories  
With this same play, against your nuptial.

*The.* And we will hear it.

*Phil.* No, my noble lord;

It is not for you: I have heard it over,  
And it is nothing, nothing in the world;  
Unless you can find sport in their intents,°  
Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,  
To do you service.

80

*The.* I will hear that play;  
For never anything can be amiss,  
When simpleness and duty tender it.  
Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.

[Exit PHILOSTRATE]

*Hip.* I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd  
And duty in his° service perishing.

*The.* Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such  
thing.

*Hip.* He says they can do nothing in this kind.

*The.* The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.  
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake : 90  
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect  
Takes it in might,° not merit.  
Where I have come, great clerks° have purposed  
To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;  
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,  
Make periods in the midst of sentences,  
Throttle their practis'd accent in their fears  
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,  
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,  
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome ; 100  
And in the modesty of fearful duty  
I read as much as from the rattling tongue  
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.  
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity  
In least speak most, to my capacity.

*Re-enter PHILOSTRATE*

*Phil.* So please your grace, the Prologue° is address'd

*The.* Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*]

*Enter QUINCE for the Prologue*

*Pro.* If we offend, it is with our good will.  
That you should think, we come not to offend,

But with good will. To show our simple skill,

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then we come but in despite.°

We do not come as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is. All for your delight

We are not here. That you should here repent you,  
The actors are at hand and by their show  
You shall know all that you are like to know.

*The.* This fellow doth not stand upon points.°

*Lys.* He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt;  
he knows not the stop.° A good moral, my lord: it is  
not enough to speak, but to speak true.

*Hip.* Indeed he hath play'd on his prologue like a  
child on a recorder°; a sound, but not in government.

*The.* His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing  
impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

*Enter with a trumpet, and the Presenter before them,  
PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, and  
LION, in dumb show*

*Pre.* Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;  
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.  
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;  
This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.  
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present

Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder ;  
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.  
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,  
Presenteth Moonshine ; for, if you will know,  
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn  
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.  
This grisly beast, which Lion hight<sup>o</sup> by name,  
The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,  
Did scare away, or rather did affright ;  
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,<sup>o</sup>

140

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.  
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,  
And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain :  
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,  
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast ;  
And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,  
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,  
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain  
At large discourse, while here they do remain.

150

[*Exeunt* PROLOGUE, THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE.

*The.* I wonder if the lion be to speak.

*Dem.* No wonder, my lord : one lion may, when  
many asses do.

*Wall.* In this same interlude it doth befall  
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;  
And such a wall, as I would have you think,  
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,  
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,  
Did whisper often very secretly.  
This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show  
That I am that same wall; the truth is so:  
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,  
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

*The.* Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

*Dem.* It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

*Enter PYRAMUS*

*The.* Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

*Pyr.* O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!

O night, which ever art when day is not!  
O night, O night! alack, alack, alack,

I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!  
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,  
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!



Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,  
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine  
eyne! [WALL *holds up his fingers.*  
Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for  
this!

But what see I? No Thisby do I see.  
O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!  
Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me! 186  
*The.* The wall, methinks, being sensible, should  
curse again.

*Pyr.* No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving  
me" is Thisby's cue; she is to enter now, and I am  
to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will  
fall pat° as I told you. Yonder she comes.

*Enter THISBE.*

*This.* O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,  
For parting my fair Pyramus and me!  
My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,  
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee. 194  
*Pyr.* I see a voice: now will I to the chink,  
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.  
Thisby!

*This.* My love thou art, my love I think.

*Pyr.* Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace°;

And, like Limander,° am I trusty still.

*This.* And I like Helen, till the Fates° me kill.

*Pyr.* Not Shafalus to Procrus° was so true.

*This.* As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

*Pyr.* O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

*This.* I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

*Pyr.* Wilt thou at Ninny's° tomb meet me straight-way ?

*This.* 'Tide life, 'tide° death, I come without delay.

[*Exeunt* PYRAMUS and *THISBE*.

*Wall.* Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so ;  
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.     [*Exit.*

*The.* Now is the wall down between the two neighbours.

*Dem.* No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.

*Hip.* This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

*The.* The best in this kind are but shadows ; and° the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

*Hip.* It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

*The.* If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

*Enter LION and MOONSHINE*

*Lion.* You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear  
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,  
May now perchance both quake and tremble here, 229

When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.  
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am  
A lion-fell,<sup>o</sup> nor else no lion's dam;  
For, if I should as lion come in strife  
Into this place, 'twere pity of my life.

*The.* A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

*Dem.* The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er  
I saw.

*Lys.* This lion is a very fox for his valour. 230

*The.* True; and a goose for his discretion.

*Dem.* Not so, my lord; for his valour cannot carry  
his discretion; and the fox carries the goose.

*The.* His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his  
valour; for the goose carries not the fox. It is well:  
leave it to his discretion, and let us hearken to the  
moon.

*Moon.* This lanthorn doth the horned moon present: —

*Dem.* He should have worn the horns on his head.

*The.* He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

*Moon.* This lanthorn doth the horned moon present ;

*Myself* the man i' th' moon do seem to be.

*The.* This is the greatest error of all the rest<sup>o</sup> : the man should be put into the lanthorn. How is it else the man i' th' moon ?

*Dem.* He dares not come there for the candle ; for, you see, it is already in snuff.<sup>o</sup>

*Hip.* I am aweary of this moon : would he would change !

*The.* It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane ; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

*Lys.* Proceed, moon.

*Moon.* All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon ; I, the man in the moon ; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush ; and this dog, my dog.

*Dem.* Why, all these should be in the lanthorn ; for they are in the moon. But, silence ! here comes Thisbe.

*Enter THISBE.*

*This.* This is old Ninny's tomb.     Where is my love ?

*Lion.* [Roaring.] Oh ———     [THISBE runs off.]

*Dem.* Well roar'd, Lion.

*The.* Well run, Thisbe.

*Hip.* Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace.

[*The LION shakes THISBE's mantle, and exit.*

*The.* Well mous'd, Lion.

*Lys.* And so the lion vanish'd.

*Dem.* And then came Pyramus.

*Enter PYRAMUS*

*Pyr.* Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams ;

270

I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright ;  
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering beames,<sup>o</sup>  
I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.

But stay, O spite !

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole<sup>o</sup> is here !

Eyes, do you see ?

How can it be ?

O dainty duck ! O dear !

Thy mantle good,

280

What, stain'd with blood !

Approach, ye Furies<sup>o</sup> fell !

O Fates,<sup>o</sup> come, come,

Cut thread and thrum°;

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

*The.* This passion and the death of a dear friend,  
would go near to make a man look sad.

*Hip.* Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

*Pyr.* O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?

Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear: 290

Which is — no, no — which was the fairest dame

That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with  
cheer.

Come, tears, confound;

Out, sword, and wound [*Stabs himself.*

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

Now am I dead,

Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky:

Tongue, lose thy light;

Moon, take thy flight: [*Exit* MOONSHINE. 300

Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Dies.*

*Dem.* No die,° but an ace, for him; for he is but  
one.

*Lys.* Less than an ace, man; for he is dead; he is  
nothing.

*The.* With the help of a surgeon he might yet re-  
cover, and prove an ass.°

*Hip.* How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes back and finds her lover?

*The.* She will find him by starlight. Here she comes; and her passion ends the play.

*Re-enter THISBE*

*Hip.* Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

*Dem.* A mote<sup>o</sup> will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better; he for a man, God warrant us; she for a woman, God bless us.

*Lys.* She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

*Dem.* And thus she moans, videlicet:—

*This.*

Asleep, my love?

What, dead, my dove?

O Pyramus, arise!

Speak, speak. Quite dumb?

Dead, dead? A tomb

Must cover thy sweet eyes.

These lily lips,

This cherry nose,

These yellow cowslip cheeks,

Are gone, are gone:

Lovers, make moan:

His eyes were green as leeks.°  
O Sisters Three,°  
Come, come to me,  
With hands as pale as milk;  
Lay them in gore,  
Since you have shore  
With shears his thread of silk.°  
Tongue, not a word:  
Come, trusty sword;  
Come, blade, my breast imbrue°:

340

*[Stabs herself.]*

And, farewell, friends;  
Thus, Thisby ends:  
Adieu, adieu, adieu.

*[Dies.]*

*The.* Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

*Dem.* Ay, and Wall too.

*Bot.* *[Starting up.]* No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue,° or to hear a Bergomask° dance between two of our company?

350

*The.* No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had play'd Pyramus and hung himself



in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy : and so it is, truly ; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask : let your epilogue alone.

[*A dance.*]

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve :  
Lovers, to bed ; 'tis almost fairy time.

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn 360

As much as we this night have overwatch'd.

This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,

In nightly revels and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*]

*Enter Puck*

*Puck.* Now the hungry lion roars,

And the wolf behowls the moon ;

Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,

All with weary task fordone.°

Now the wasted brands do glow, 370

Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,

Puts the wretch that lies in woe

In remembrance of a shroud.

Now it is the time of night

That the graves all gaping wide,

Every one lets forth his sprite,

In the church-way paths to glide :  
And we fairies, that do run

By the triple Hecate's<sup>o</sup> team,  
From the presence of the sun, 380

Following darkness like a dream,  
Now are frolic : not a mouse  
Shall disturb this hallow'd house :  
I am sent with broom before,  
To sweep the dust behind the door.

*Enter OBERON and TITANIA with their train*

*Obe.* Though the house give glimmering light,  
By the dead and drowsy fire,  
Every elf and fairy sprite  
Hop as light as bird from brier ·  
And this ditty, after me, 390  
Sing, and dance it trippingly.

*Tita.* First, rehearse your song by rote,  
To each word a warbling note :  
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
Will we sing, and bless this place.

*[Song and dance.*

*Obe.* Now, until the break of day,  
Through this house each fairy stray.  
To the best bride-bed will we,

Which by us shall blessed be°;  
And the issue there create 400  
Ever shall be fortunate.  
So shall all the couples three  
Ever true in loving be;  
And the blots of Nature's hand  
Shall not in their issue stand;  
Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,  
Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
Despised in nativity,  
Shall upon their children be.  
With this field-dew consecrate,° 410  
Every fairy take his gait;  
And each several chamber bless,  
Through this palace, with sweet peace;  
And the owner of it blest  
Ever shall in safety rest.  
Trip away; make no stay;  
Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt* OBERON, TITANIA, and train.

*Puck.* If we shadows have offended,  
Think but this, and all is mended,  
That you have but slumber'd here 420  
While these visions did appear.  
And this weak and idle theme,

430



## NOTES

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### ACT I. SCENE I

**THE** purposes of the first act are to introduce the characters, to give us the setting, and to arouse our interest in the story to be unfolded. In the first scene we learn quickly the story of Theseus and the plight of the lovers.

**4. Lingers.** Keeps waiting.

**5. Dowager.** A widow receiving during her life the use of the property which eventually must fall to the heir.

**6. Withering out a young man's revenue.** Delaying the young man's enjoyment of his property.

**15. Pale companion.** The moon.

**19. Triumph.** A celebration with elaborate processions, such as attended the home-coming of Roman conquerors.

**20. Duke.** Were there dukes in ancient Athens?

**31. Faining.** This is the original spelling of the Quartos and the Folio. "A paraphrase of *faining* would be *love-sick*." — Furness.

**32. Stolen the impression of her fantasy.** Won her love by stealth.

**33. Gawds.** Toys.

39. Be it so she will not. In case she will not. Why is the subjunctive used?

41. Ancient privilege of Athens. The power to put a child to death was given to parents by a law of Solon, of which Shakespeare may or may not have known.

43. Shall. Why not "will"?

54. In this kind. In this respect.

60. How it may concern, etc. How it may be proper for a modest person.

65. Die the death. The death due by law. "Shakespeare always uses this expression of a judicial punishment." — Wright.

68. Know of your youth. Inquire of your youthful feelings.

71. Mewed. Shut up.

74. Blood. Supply *are* after blessed and *as* after blood. See Abbott, 281.<sup>1</sup>

76. Earthlier. A hint of the mediæval notion that celibacy is a virtue rewarded in heaven.

80. Virgin patent. The rights of a maiden. A patent was formerly a grant issued by kings to confer special privileges.

89. Diana. The goddess of chastity, a personification of the moon as a beautiful huntress.

92. Crazed. Broken, cracked.

<sup>1</sup> Abbott's *Shakespearean Grammar*, edition of 1870.

99. **Derived.** Born, descended.

100. **As well possessed.** Having as great possessions.

104. **Of.** By. Abbott, 171. "Of" originally meant "from."

110. **Spotted.** That is, spotted with sins. "As spotless is innocent, so spotted is wicked." — Johnson.

112. **To have spoke.** An early English form. Abbott, 343.

113. **Self-affairs.** My own affairs.

117. **Arm yourself.** Prepare yourself.

120. **Extenuate.** Lessen the strength of.

127. **Observe** how carelessly Egeus leaves Lysander and Hermia together. This interview, however, is necessary for dramatic purposes.

130. **Belike.** Perhaps.

131. **Beteem.** Bestow upon.

136. **High.** As regards birth.

137. **Misgraffed.** Unsuitd.

139. **Stood upon.** Depended upon.

140. **Hell.** Do not think the less of Hermia for this exclamation. In Shakespeare's time much more freedom in language was customary than now. "Hell!" to Hermia meant no more than "Bother!" to a woman of to-day.

145. **Collied.** Blackened.

146. **Spleen.** A swift fit of passion. — Wright.

149. **Confusion.** Destruction.



150. **Ever.** Always.

151. **An edict in destiny.** It is decreed by fate.

155. **Fancy.** Love, as frequently in Shakespeare.

164. **Forth.** Supply from. In Shakespeare, prepositions are often omitted after verbs of motion.

167. **Do observance to a morn of May.** To celebrate on May Day the coming of spring was an English not a Greek custom.

169. **Cupid.** The god of love, represented as a winged boy with bow and arrows.

170. **Best arrow.** "An allusion to the two arrows mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1, 466: 't'one causeth love, the tother doth it slake. That causeth love, is all of golde with point full sharpe and bright, that chaseth love is blunt, whose steele with leaden head is dight.' Golding's trans." — Halliwell.

171. **Venus.** Goddess of love. Her chariot was drawn by doves.

173. **Carthage queen.** Dido, who burned herself upon a funeral pyre when her lover, Æneas, sailed away from Carthage, leaving her behind.

174. **False Trojan.** Æneas, who was a fugitive from Troy.

175. **Broke.** Compare spoke, l. 112. Perfect participles in Shakespeare often omit *n*. Abbott, 343.

182. **Fair.** Fairness, beauty.

**183. Lode-stars.** Guiding stars. Here also there is evidently a notion of attracting like a lodestone or magnet.

**190. Bated.** Excepted.

**203. Myself.** Is this use of "myself" correct to-day?

**205. Like.** Here the First Quarto substitutes "as."

**209. Phœbe.** The moon. Note the profusion of metaphors in this sentence.

**212. Still.** Always, its regular meaning in Shakespeare.

**217. Myself.** See l. 203 and note.

**223. Lover's food.** The idea that love is fed by gazing seems to be a favorite thought with Shakespeare. Cf.

"Tell me where is fancy bred,  
Or in the heart or in the head?  
How begot, how nourished?  
Reply, reply,  
It is engendered in the eyes,  
With gazing fed."

— *Merchant of Venice* III., ii., 63-68.

**226. Some.** Persons.

**232. Things base and vile . . . dignity.** Love can transform low and repulsive things, which bear no proportion to love's estimate of them.

**236. Nor . . . taste.** Love shows no sign of judgment.

**237. Unheedy.** Careless.

**239. Beguil'd.** Deceived.

**242. Eyne.** The old English plural of eye. Cf. oxen, brethren, children.

**246.** Coleridge says: "The act itself is natural and the resolve so to act is, I fear, likewise, too true a picture of the lax hold which principles have on a woman's heart, when opposed to, or even separated from, passion and inclination." Is this true?

**249. A dear expense.** A costly sacrifice because it will be in return for procuring Demetrius a sight of Hermia.

## ACT I. SCENE II

This scene introduces the characters concerned in the third story of the play.

**2. You were best.** (To) you (it) were best. Abbott, 230. Generally. Bottom, of course, means separately.

**3. Scrip.** Paper.

**5. Every man's name which is thought fit.** The name of every man *who* is thought fit. "Who" and "which" are used interchangeably in Shakespeare. Abbott, 265.

**6. Interlude.** See Introduction, p. xxxi.

**11. Marry.** A common exclamation, originally "By Mary," but meaning here no more than "Well, then." **Lamentable comedy.** This title is probably a burlesque of the titles of some of the plays of the time. In 1561 a play was published under the name, *A Lamentable Tragedie, mixed full of pleasant Mirth*, etc.

**12. Pyramus and Thisby.** The correct spelling is Thisbe. Bottom and his friends probably pronounced the name Thisbei. Pyramus and Thisbe were lovers who occupied adjoining houses in Babylon. Because of a quarrel between their parents, they were forbidden to see or to speak to each other. However, they discovered a crack in the wall between the houses, through which they conversed, and finally made arrangements for a meeting just outside of the city gates. While Thisbe, who was the first to arrive, was awaiting her lover, she was frightened away by a lion. In her flight she dropped her veil, which the lion tore to pieces. Pyramus, coming soon afterwards and finding the torn and bloody veil, concluded that Thisbe had been devoured by the lion, whose footprints he could see; and in despair he thrust his dagger into his heart. In a short time, Thisbe returned, and finding her lover dead, drew the dagger from his body, and plunging it into her bosom, died by his side. Since that time the mulberry tree by which they had agreed to meet has changed the color of its berries from white to red, dyed by the blood that flowed from the wounds of Pyramus and Thisbe.

**22. Tyrant.** Tyrants were common characters in Elizabethan plays. Their parts usually were acted in a very violent, boisterous manner popular with the pit (our gallery).

**28. Condole.** Grieve.

**30. Ercles.** Hercules. The famous demigod in Greek mythology, renowned for his great strength. This was a roaring, blustering part.

30. To tear a cat in. To make a great uproar upon the stage.

31-38. The raging rocks . . . foolish Fates. These verses are perhaps a quotation from some bombastic old play, perhaps only a burlesque of the melodramatic rant which was common in early plays and which Shakespeare condemns in *Hamlet*. "O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise." — *Hamlet*, III., ii., 9-13.

36. Phibbus. Phœbus, a name of Apollo, the sun-god, who drove in a golden car.

40. Now name the rest of the players. Note Bottom's self-importance and his division of the players into: (1) Himself, (2) The rest. — Chambers.

49. I have a beard coming. Remember that all women's parts were taken by boys. A story is told of Davenant's giving as a reason why a play did not commence promptly that they were engaged in "shaving the queen." — Variorum.

50. In a mask. Masks seem to have been used sometimes to hide a beard.

52. An. If, regularly in Shakespeare.

53. Monstrous little. Note the comic contradiction.

77. Were. Would be.

81. Aggravate. Properly this word means to make worse. Bottom again says the opposite of what he means.

**82. Roar you.** Roar for your entertainment. An example of the so-called ethical dative. Cf. the ethical dative in Latin. Abbott, 220. **Sucking dove.** Sucking doves are probably as scarce as hens' teeth.

**83. An 'twere.** As if it (the lion) were.

**85. Proper.** Handsome, the regular meaning in Shakespeare. Observe Quince's use of gross flattery to win Bottom over.

**88. Were I best.** Cf. ll. 2 and 77 of this scene and notes.

**91. Straw-color.** The dyeing of beards was common in the sixteenth century.

**92. Purple-in-grain.** In-grain signified a particularly durable dye.

**93. French-crown-color.** A French crown was a coin of gold.

**95. Crowns.** Crowns here refers to bald heads. This play upon the two meanings of crown is an example of the Elizabethan fondness for puns.

**103. Properties.** The technical word still employed for the accessories of a play.

**106. Obscenely.** Obscurely. A characteristic blunder of Bottom's.

**109. Hold or cut bowstrings.** A proverbial phrase meaning, "Whatever happens." "In the days of archery when a party was made . . . assurance of meeting was given in this phrase; the sense of the speaker being that he would 'hold,' or keep promise, or they might 'cut his bowstrings,' demolish him for an archer." — Capell.

## QUESTIONS

## ACT I. SCENE I

What do the opening lines suggest is the mood of the play? Compare the opening lines of *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. In what natural way are we told what it is necessary for us to know about the circumstances when the play opens? How is the same kind of information often given in modern plays?

Describe Theseus and Hippolyta as they appear to your imagination: mention their probable age, bearing, size, costume, etc. Picture mentally the surroundings. What style of architecture would have been used in a Greek palace? As other important characters are introduced into the play, form a mental picture of each.

Do you know of any famous tales or histories in which the course of true love does not run smooth? How does the form of Hermia's exclamations, ll. 136, 138, 140, make them forceful? In ll. 141-149, to what does the poet compare love? What does he suggest may be revealed by love? What is the relation of the last line to the rest of the passage? What especial appropriateness do you find in Hermia's oaths? What device makes ll. 198-199 arrest the attention? How does Helena destroy our sympathy for her? Why should the poet wish us to lose sympathy for her? Find in this scene examples of effective repetition, of alliteration, and of references to nature. What is the most beautiful picture suggested to the imagination in Scene I? What has been accomplished in this scene? How has curiosity been aroused?

## ACT I. SCENE II

How do the place, the characters, and the tone of this scene differ from those of Scene I? What is gained by the placing of this scene directly after Scene I? Why is prose used here? What is Shakespeare's opinion about the style of acting Bottom describes?

What is evidently Bottom's position in the group of "mechanicals"? What makes his language especially amusing? What is the conspicuous weakness of his character? How does Quince induce him to play Pyramus? Do the characters named in this rehearsal all appear in the play? (See Act V.) Can you account for the difference? What has been accomplished in this scene, both in giving information and in arousing curiosity?

## ACT II. SCENE I

In the first scene still another story, that of the fairies, is introduced, and the introduction is completed.

3. **Thorough.** Through. The spelling in the text indicates the burr with which *r* was pronounced. Abbott, 478.

4. **Pale.** Fence.

7. **Moones.** An old form of the genitive case. Our possessive was formed by dropping the *e*, the loss of which is marked by the apostrophe. **Sphere.** The moon was supposed to be fixed in a hollow sphere which was swung around the earth once in twenty-four hours.

9. **Orbs.** Circles formed by a fine growth of grass. The



superstitious country folk believed these to be the seats of fairy revels, and so called them fairy-rings.

10. Pensioners. An allusion to a band of handsome young men maintained by Queen Elizabeth as military courtiers.

16. Lob. Clown.

17. Anon. At once. It is interesting to note that the slowness of people who said they were coming "anon," has caused a gradual change in the meaning of the word from immediately to pretty soon, or by and by, which is its meaning now.

20. Fell. Cruel or angry. Wrath. Wrathful.

23. Changeling. Usually applied to a child left by fairies in place of one which they had stolen. The changelings were ugly. Here, the word is used of the beautiful child stolen by the fairies. Whittier's poem, "The Changeling," in *The Tent on the Beach*, is based on this superstition.

29. Sheen. Bright.

30. Square. Quarrel.

33. Shrewd. Mischievous.

Compare the description of Robin Goodfellow given by Milton in *L'Allegro* :—

"And he, by friar's lanthorn led,  
Tells how the drudging goblin swet  
To earn his cream-bowle duly set,  
When in one night, ere glimps of morn,  
His shadowy ffile hath thresh'd the corn

That ten day-laborers could not end;  
Then lies him down, the lubbar fend,  
And stretched out all the chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,  
And crop full out of dores he flings,  
Ere the first cock his mattin rings."

**34.** Are you not he? This is the reading of the Folio. The First Quarto reads, "Are not you he?"

**36.** Quern. A handmill for grinding corn.

**38.** Barm. Yeast. Puck kept the beer from fermenting, with the result that the housewives could get no yeast, for yeast is made from the froth of fermenting malt liquors.

**40.** Sweet Puck. As Puck alone meant fiend or devil, the adjective is not superfluous.

**47.** Gossip's bowl. An old woman's bowl containing a drink like the lamb's wool mentioned in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, compounded of ale, sugar, nutmeg, toast, and roasted apples.

**50.** Dewlap. The folds of skin hanging from the chin and throat.

**54.** Tailor. This expression is explained by Dr. Johnson as a common exclamation at a fall because he who falls squats like a tailor. Halliwell calls it an expression of contempt equivalent to thief. Furness says, "The slight substitution of an *e* for *o* in the word 'tailor' will show that, as boys in swimming take a header, 'the wisest aunt' was subjected to the opposite." When doctors disagree, the student may take his choice.

56. Neeze. Sneeze.

58. Fairy. Pronounced as three syllables. The quarrels of these tiny beings seem as absurd as the wars of the Lilliputians described in *Gulliver's Travels*.

63. Wanton. Flirt.

66. Corin. Phillida. These were conventional names for a shepherd and his love in pastoral poetry.

67. Corn. Not our Indian corn or maize, but probably oats. The word corn is in England applied to any grain.

70. Amazon. A female warrior. Here, of course, the reference is to Hippolyta.

72. Must. Will be ; as in *The Merchant of Venice*, where Portia says, "Then, must the Jew be merciful." Abbott, 314.

78. Perigouna, Ægle, Ariadne, Antiopa, the names of these loves of Theseus are given in North's Plutarch.

90. Contagious. Pestilential.

92. Continents. Banks. What is the derivation of continents?

94. Corn. Wheat. See note on l. 67.

97. Murrain. Plague-smitten.

98. Nine men's morris. A game in which each player had nine pieces that he moved on squares cut in the turf.

99. Mazes. Winding paths trodden by boys. Wanton. Wild.

101. The human mortals . . . here. After such a summer as has been described, men naturally desire winter, the

season of hymns, carols, and universal mirth. Some editors have inserted a comma after "want," changing the sense to, "The mortals are in want because their winter is here out of season;" but this change is unnecessary.

**103. Therefore.** This refers to l. 87. • The moon governs the floods inasmuch as it causes the tides.

**105. That.** To that, as often. **Rheumatic.** Accented on first syllable.

**106. Thorough.** Through, as in II., i., 3.

**109. Hiems.** Winter's.

**112. Childing.** Fruitful. This word in some editions has been changed unnecessarily to chiding.

**113. Mazed.** Bewildered.

**117. Original.** Source.

**118. It lies in you.** It depends upon you.

**123. Vot'ress.** A female worshipper.

**126. Neptune.** God of the sea.

**146. A mermaid on a dolphin's back.** This may be a reminiscence of the revels given at Kenilworth for Queen Elizabeth in Shakespeare's boyhood. See Introduction, p. xv.

**154. Vestal.** A maiden. The priestesses of Vesta at Rome took a vow never to marry. This line is a graceful compliment to Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen. Some think that the mermaid in l. 146 refers to her rival, Mary, Queen of Scots; but this interpretation is not generally accepted

**159. Votaress.** Here, one who has taken a vow never to marry.

**160. Fancy-free.** Unwounded by love.

**170. Leviathan.** Whale.

**181. I am invisible.** This is said for the information of the audience.

**187. Were stol'n.** Have stolen. Shakespeare often uses "is" in place of "has" with intransitive verbs. Abbott, 295.

**188. Wode.** Enraged. Note the pun. Such plays upon words were in high favor in Shakespeare's time, and he dotes upon them.

**191. Adamant.** Lodestone, or magnet.

**197. Nor I cannot.** The double negative is often used for emphasis in Elizabethan English. Abbott, 408.

**204. Worser.** Compare "the most unkindest cut of all," *Julius Cæsar*, III., ii., 187. Double comparisons are often used by Shakespeare for emphasis. Abbott, 11.

**210. Impeach.** Make people doubt.

**220. In my respect.** In respect to me ; as far as I am concerned.

**227. Apollo.** Apollo, the sun-god, pursued the nymph Daphne till, in answer to her prayer, her father changed her into a laurel tree.

**228. Griffin.** A fabulous animal with wings and upper parts of an eagle and the lower parts of a lion.

**232.** Do not believe but. Have no belief that I shall not. Abbott, 121, 122.

**236.** Your wrongs. The wrongs you do me. Compare the subjective genitive in Latin.

**241.** Nymph. A conventional term for lady.

**246.** Oxlips. A small flower like a cowslip.

**247.** Woodbine. Honeysuckle.

**248.** Eglantine. Sweet-brier, wild rose.

**250.** Lulled in these flowers. How big was Titania?

**252.** Weed. Garment. In what phrase do we retain the word?

## SCENE II

In this scene the stories, which have all now been set in motion, begin to become tangled under the influence of the spells of the Midsummer Night.

**1.** Roundel. A circular dance.

**2.** Third part of a minute. Observe how the fairies measure time.

**3.** Cankers. Canker-worms.

**4.** Rere-mice. Bats.

**7.** Quaint. Dainty. Beware of misusing this word.

**11.** Newts. Lizards.

**13.** Philomel. Nightingale.

**30.** Ounce. A variety of panther. Cat. Wildcat.

**31.** Pard. Leopard.

42. Troth. Pledge of fidelity. Compare betrothal.
46. In love's conference. In love's conversation all is interpreted by love.
54. Beshrew. Plague take.
59. Becomes. Is proper for.
65. Be. Why is the subjunctive used?
68. Approve. Prove.
71. Weeds. Garments.
79. Owe. Own.
80. Forbid. A verb, not an adjective.
86. Darkling. In the dark.
88. Fond. Foolish as well as loving.
89. Lesser. See note on "worsen," II., i., 208.
97. As a monster. The monster refers to Helena.
99. Sphery. As bright as spheres. — Chambers.
104. Shows her. The reading of the Folio, "her shows" is probably a printer's error.
118. Ripe. A verb. The sense is, till now I have not been old enough to form a reasonable judgment.
- 125-126. Is it not enough. Furness suggests that Helena's repetitions here and in l. 129 are the effect of sobbing.
128. Flout. Mock.
133. Of. By, as often in Shakespeare.
136. Near. An example of a preposition following its object.

149. Eat. Past tense.

153. An if. If indeed.

## ACT II. SCENE I

Note the change in setting suitable to the characters. How large do you imagine the fairies to be? Is Puck a wicked spirit, or merely mischievous? What is his other name? Why have the fairies assembled? What do ll. 81-117 imply regarding the power and influence of these tiny beings? What mistake does Helena make in her method of seeking to win Demetrius's love? Why doesn't the quarrel between Oberon and Titania seem real and serious? What passages in this scene reveal Shakespeare's observation of nature? How has the story been advanced by this scene?

Scene II. At what time of day does the action of Scene II take place? What action of the fairies accompanies their song? Is Puck's mistake natural? How does Lysander account for the sudden change in his feeling? What progress in the stories is made in this scene?

## ACT III. SCENE I

In this scene the story of the fairies and the story of the tradesmen are brought together by the transition of Bottom. The contrast between the delicate fancy of the former and the broad humor of the latter heightens the effect.

2. Pat. To the point.



4. **Brake.** A clump of bushes. **Tiring-house.** Attiring house, or dressing-room.

8. **Bully Bottom.** A title implying friendly admiration.

10. **There are things that will never please.** Note the authoritative manner in which Bottom criticises and his readiness with "a device to make all well."

13. **By'r lakin.** By our lady-kin, our little lady. **Parlous.** Perilous.

20. **More better.** See note on "worser." II., i., 208.

23. **Prologue.** See Introduction, p. xxxiv.

24. **Eight and Six.** In alternate lines of eight and six syllables respectively, the usual ballad metre.

39. **Defect.** A Bottomism for effect.

43. **Pity of my life.** Pity concerning my life. Abbott, 174.

59. **Disfigure.** Bottom's blunder for figure.

75. **Cue.** The term still used to indicate the catchphrase which notifies an actor that he must be ready to be in his part.

76. **Hempen home-spuns.** Roughly clad rustics.

78. **A play toward.** A play to be acted.

81. **Odious.** A Bottomism for odorous; or perhaps the line originally read, "the flowers have odours, savours sweet."

94. **Juvenal.** An affected word for youth. Eke. Also.

116. **You see, etc.** Bottom is not aware of his transformation. This expression is a well-worn retort to one who expressed amazement at any oddity of dress. — Halliwell.

119. Translated. Transformed.

125. Ousel. Blackbird.

127. Throstle. Thrush.

139. Enthralled. Enslaved.

146. Gleek. Joke.

148. Not so, neither. Another example of the double negative common in Elizabethan English.

165. Apricocks. Apricots.

181. Desire you of more acquaintance. "Of" has here the sense of concerning. Abbott, 174. For this use of "desire," compare John xii. 21, A. V., "they desired him saying," and *The Merchant of Venice*, IV., i., 402. "I humbly do desire your grace of pardon."

165. Squash. Not our squash, but a soft, unripe peascod, or pea-pod. Our squash is an abbreviated form of the American Indian word "asquatasquash."

200. Silently. If the reader will recall Bottom's transformation, he will find no difficulty in understanding why Titania does not admire his voice so much as his shape; yet, she has praised his note in l. 138. Perhaps, however, she was not fully awake then.

## SCENE II

In this scene the story of the lovers is advanced, while just enough mention is made of the fairies to keep us from forgetting their share in the action.

3. In extremity. Exceedingly.
5. Night-rule. Behavior, or order, by night.
9. Patches. Fools. Court fools were commonly called "patches" because of the resemblance of their particolored clothing to patched garments. **Mechanicals.** Mechanics.
13. Sort. Company.
17. Nowl. Head.
18. Anon. At once.
19. Mimic. Actor.
21. Russet-pated choughs. Jackdaws, a kind of birds, with gray heads. Russet in Shakespeare's time meant gray.
25. At our stamp. The fairies had power to shake the earth.
30. Yielders. Those who yield.
36. Latch'd. Moistened.
40. Of force. By necessity.
44. Breath. Words.
55. Brother. The sun. **Antipodes.** Usually the opposite side of the earth; here, the people there.
57. Dead. Deadly.
61. Sphere. In the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, which was in vogue in Shakespeare's time, the moon and the stars were supposed to be fixed each in a hollow sphere.
74. On a misprised mood. In a mistaken temper.
- 84-87. So sorrow . . . stay. My sorrow grows heavier on account of my lack of sleep, and so a little sleep will relieve my grief, if I stop to take it. "His" means sleep's.

90. Misprision. Mistake.

91. True love turn'd. Turned to false.

93. One man . . . oath. Whatever men do, fate acts so that not one man in a million keeps his oaths in love.

96. Fancy-sick. Love-sick.

97. Costs. Modern grammar would require the plural. There was an old belief that every sigh cost a drop of blood.

101. Tartars. The Tartars were famous as archers.

119. Sport alone. Excellent sport.

125. Vows so born . . . appears. Vows so born appear from their nativity, or birth, to be true. — Furness.

129-133. When truth . . . tales. His former vows to Hermia are at war with his present vows to Helena, and one set of vows just balances the other, while both are as light as fictions.

139. Crystal is muddy. The extravagance of Demetrius's language is characteristic of Elizabethan lovers. See the description of the Elizabethan Age in the Introduction.

141. Taurus. The Taurus Mountains are in Asia Minor.

160. Extort. Wring. Schmidt.

175. Aby. . Pay for.

188. Oes. Circles.

203. Artificial. Creative. Look up the derivation.

208. So we grew together. Compare with the beautiful description in ll. 202-214, the description Celia gives of her friendship with Rosalind in *As You Like It*: —

"... we still have slept together,  
Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat, together,  
And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,  
Still we went coupled and inseparable."— I, iii, 75-78.

**213. Of the first.** Of the first of the several divisions upon an heraldical shield.

**214. One crest.** A shield bearing the coats of arms of two married persons would, of course, be surmounted by one crest only, that of the husband.

**215. Rent. Rend.**

**237. Persever.** This word is regularly accented by Shakespeare on the second syllable.

**257. Ethiope.** Brunettes were not in fashion under the blond Queen Elizabeth.

**260. Burr.** Hermia is appropriately called "burr" because she clings to Lysander.

**263. Tawny Tartar.** Another hint of Hermia's complexion.

**268. Weak bond.** Hermia's embrace.

**269. What?** This is the punctuation of the First Quarto. The Folio follows "what" by a comma.

**282. Canker-blossom.** "You who cankers blossoms." — Furness.

**288. Puppet.** A suggestion of Hermia's small stature.

**296. Painted.** A jealous fling at Helena's red and white complexion.

**300. Curst. Cross.**

**302. Right. Real.**

**317. Fond. Foolish.**

**324. Vixen.** A shrew. Originally this word meant a she-fox. *En* was a feminine termination in early English.

**329. Minimus.** Least of creatures. **Knot-grass.** Supposed to prevent the growth of animals and children. — Steevens.

**335. Aby. Pay for.**

**338. Jowl. Jaw.**

**339. Coil. Confusion.**

**345. Still.** Always, the usual meaning in Shakespeare.

**352. And so far . . . sort.** I am glad for the way matters have turned out in this respect ; namely, that their quarrel amuses me.

**357. Acheron.** A river of the lower world.

**365. Batty.** Like a bat's. Why appropriate?

**379. Dragons.** The chariot of Nox, the goddess of night, was drawn by dragons.

**380. Aurora's harbinger.** Aurora was the goddess of the dawn. Her harbinger was the morning-star.

**383. Crossways.** Those who committed suicide were buried at crossroads, and with those who were drowned, and so never buried properly, were believed to be condemned to wander a hundred years before they could find rest.

**389. With the morning's love have oft made sport.**  
• "Oberon merely means to say metaphorically that he has

sported with Aurora, the morning's love, the first blush of morning; and that he is not, like a ghost, compelled to vanish at the dawn of day." — Halliwell.

**391. Eastern gate.** Compare ll. 59–62 of Milton's "L'Allegro":—

"Right against the eastern gate  
Where the great sun begins his state,  
Rob'd in flames and amber light,  
The clouds in thousand liveries dight."

**409. Recreant.** Coward.

**422. Wot.** Know.

**439. Curst.** Out of sorts.

**463. The man, etc.** A proverbial expression signifying that all will be right in the end. — Wright.

## QUESTIONS

### ACT III. SCENE I

Is Bottom's suggestion about the prologue carried out when the play is given? See V., i. Why are his suggestions of explaining the play ludicrous? Would he appreciate the services that Titania directs his fairy attendants to render? What would he prefer? Do ll. 1–74 advance the action? What is their purpose? At the end of the scene, why does Titania direct the fairies to bring Bottom silently?

## SCENE II

How does Puck describe Bottom? Why does Hermia suspect Demetrius? Does Oberon enjoy Hermia's suffering, or is he eager to repair Puck's mistake? Is Puck's feeling about the confusion he has produced consistent with his character? Why do Helena and Lysander believe Demetrius is insincere? Where does Hermia first comprehend that Lysander means his protestations of love for Helena? What do you learn in this scene of the appearance of Helena and of Hermia? What action of Hermia is suggested by ll. 257-260? What is the "weak bond" of l. 268? What difference in the characters of Helena and Hermia is shown by their angry speeches? How do Lysander and Hermia act while ll. 320-330 are being spoken? What is Oberon's opinion of Puck? What lines in his speech (ll. 388-395) are most poetical? How is an opportunity to repair his blunders given Puck naturally? Where has the confusion of the lovers reached its height? What has been accomplished in this scene? What remains to be explained in the rest of the play?

## ACT IV. SCENE I

In this act the complications which reached their height in Act III. are resolved, or unravelled. Observe in the first scene again the contrast between Bottom's vulgar desires and the delicate pleasures Titania offers him.

2. Coy. Stroke, caress.

19. Neif. Fist.

K



**22. Cavalery.** *Cavalero*, or cavalier. Doesn't Bottom get the names of his attendants confused? He had sent Cobweb away on an errand.

**29. Tongs and bones.** A pair of tongs struck with a metal key and bones like those used by our minstrels would furnish music such as Bottom enjoyed.

**33. Bottle.** A bundle of a certain size and shape used as a measure of quantity.

**35. Venturous.** Why is this a proper epithet for this fairy?

**39. Exposition.** Disposition.

**42. Woodbine.** Usually the same as the honeysuckle. Here it probably means another plant, the bindweed.

**43. Female ivy.** Female, because it requires support.

**73. Dian's bud.** The bud of the *agnus castus*. — Steevens. **Cupid's flower.** Heart's-ease.

**105. Vaward.** The early part.

**107. Uncouple.** Let loose the hounds.

**112. Hercules.** The Greek demigod celebrated for his strength. **Cadmus.** The mythical founder of Thebes.

**113. Bay'd.** Drove to bay.

**119. Spartan kind.** Spartan hounds were famous for their excellence.

**120. Flew'd.** "Flews are the large chaps (jaws) of a deep-mouthed hound." — Hammer. **Sanded.** Of a sandy hue.

**122. Dew-lapp'd.** See II., i., 50, and note.

**123. Matched in mouth like bells.** In Shakespeare's time, hounds were chosen and formed into packs so that their cries should harmonize, each giving a different tone ("each under each") like the bells in a chime. Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley formed his pack on the same principle.

**133. The rite of May.** See I., i., 167, and note.

**140. Begin . . . now.** There was an old saying that birds begin to mate on St. Valentine's day.

**164. Wot. Know.**

**166. Melts.** Some word has dropped out of the text here, which reads "melted as the snow." "Melts" is Dyce's conjecture.

**167. Gaud.** Trifling ornament.

**178. Shall hear more.** This is the reading of the Folio. The Quartos read, "we more will hear" and "we will hear more," respectively.

**182. For. Since.**

**189. With parted eye.** "As one would, if one's eyes were not in focus with each other." — Deighton.

**191. Like a jewel.** Having found Demetrius unexpectedly, Helena considers her ownership of him as uncertain as that which a person has of a jewel that he has found by accident.

**203. God's my life.** A common exclamation shortened from, "As God is my life."

**210. Patched fool.** See note on III., ii., 9.

**211. The eye of man, etc.** What does Bottom parody here?

**218. Her.** Whose? Possibly Thisbe's. More probably, *at her* is a copyist's error for *after*. Bottom means that, after he has died in the character of Pyramus, he will sing this when he tells of his wonderful dream.

## SCENE II

This scene serves to prepare us for Act V.

**4. Transported.** What word did Quince use in III., i., 119?

**10. He hath . . . Athens.** Bottom's companions take him at his own valuation. What grammatical error is found in this line? Abbott, 409.

**14. A thing of naught.** A piece of worthlessness.

**20. Sixpence a day.** In the sixteenth century, sixpence a day was a sum not to be despised by a poor man. It was equivalent in purchasing power to between seventy-five cents and a dollar of our money.

**27. Courageous.** Quince used the first long word that came to him.

**35. Strings.** To hold on the false beards.

**42. Breath.** A pun on the two senses of the word: an exhalation from the nostrils, and language.

## QUESTIONS

## ACT IV. SCENE I

Account for the use of verse and of prose in ll. 1-45. Name the five persons referred to in l. 82. How do Bottom, the lovers, and Titania, all regard the events of the night? Why does not the play end here?

## SCENE II

Compare the opinion that Flute and Quince have of Bottom with that given by Puck in III., ii., 13. Can you give a reason for the difference? Why does Bottom not tell his companions about his dream? How is this scene connected with the preceding? How does it prepare for Act V.?

## ACT V. SCENE I

Though the stories of the lovers and the fairies are complete at the end of Act IV., Scene I., the audience has yet to see the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta, in which interest was aroused at the opening of the play, and the performance of the interlude, which has been rehearsed by Bottom's company. To satisfy curiosity in regard to these stories, and so to finish the unravelling of the play, is the purpose of Act V. In addition, Shakespeare takes the opportunity to introduce Theseus's opinions concerning plays and an epithalamium, or marriage song.

7. Poet. What faculty of the mind is essential to a poet?

11. Helen. The most beautiful woman of antiquity, the

wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. Her elopement with Paris, a Trojan prince, caused the famous Trojan war described in Homer's *Iliad*. **Brow of Egypt.** See note on III., ii., 257.

**14. Bodies forth.** Gives a body to.

**21-22. Or in the night . . . bear.** These lines are rejected by R. G. White as, in his view, unworthy of Shakespeare, but they are given in both the Quartos and in the Folio, and can therefore hardly be regarded as spurious.

**32. Masques.** See Introduction, p. xxxii.

**34. After-supper.** A collation of fruit and sweetmeats served after supper as a sort of dessert. — Stanton.

**39. Abridgement.** A diversion to shorten the time.

**42. Brief.** A condensed account. **Ripe** Ready.

**44. Lysander.** Lines 44, 45, 48, 49, 52, 53, 56, 57, are given by many editors following the Quartos to Theseus instead of to Lysander. The assignment of them to Lysander has the authority of the Folio. **Centaur.** A mythical race of creatures with the bodies of horses and the heads of men. Their battle with the Lapithæ, people who dwelt in Thessaly, in which they were aided by Theseus and Hercules, was a favorite subject in art.

**48. Bacchanals.** The frenzied worshippers of Bacchus, god of wine and revelry. Enraged by the sad music which was played by Orpheus, the renowned musician, in answer to their request for a gay dance, they tore him to pieces and cast his remains into the Hebrus River.

**52. The Muses.** The nine goddesses who presided over history, astronomy, and the various kinds of poetry. The entertainment suggested was probably a lament over the low state of learning.

**65. Fitted.** Suited to his part.

**74. Unbreathed.** Unpractised.

**79. Intents.** Endeavors, which are "stretch'd to the utmost" of their abilities.

**86. His.** Its.

**92. Might.** Will, or intention.

**93. Clerks.** Scholars.

**106. Prologue.** An actor who recited the prologue. See Introduction, p. xxxiv. **Addressed.** Ready.

**112. In despite.** With an evil intention.

**118. Stand upon points.** Regard points of punctuation.

**120. Stop.** A term in horsemanship used here in a punning sense. — Wright.

**123. Recorder.** A little pipe, or flute.

**138. Hight.** Was called.

**141. Fall.** Let fall.

**186. Pat.** Precisely. Note Bottom's readiness to instruct Theseus.

**195. Lover's grace.** Graceful lover.

**196. Limander.** Limander and Helen are blunders for Leander and Hero. Leander, the lover of Hero, swam the

Hellespont nightly to visit her. One night, however, he was drowned, and she threw herself into the sea.

**197. The Fates.** The three sisters in charge of the thread of life. Clotho spun the thread; Lachesis twisted it; and Atropos, armed with shears, remorselessly cut it short.

**198. Shafalus.** Shafalus and Procrus are corruptions of Cephalus and Procris, two lovers described by Ovid.

**202. Ninny's.** Ninus's.

**203. Tide. Betide.** The meaning is, whatever befalls, I come.

**211. The Best in this kind are but shadows.** Theseus means that there is little difference between the best and the worst plays; both require imagination. What was the fault in the methods of Bottom's company that is suggested by Theseus's statement?

**223. Lion-fell.** Lion's skin.

**244. This is the greatest error of all the rest.** Is this line grammatically correct? Abbott, 409.

**248. In snuff.** A phrase applied to an angry person as well as to a candle.

**268. Well moused.** Torn. What action of the lion calls forth this remark?

**273. Beames.** Some editors have substituted "gleames," which increases the alliteration; but "beames" is the reading of both Quartos and of the First Folio.

**277. Dole.** Grief.

**283. Furies.** Three deities with snaky locks who drove guilty souls to torment. **Fell.** Cruel.

**284. Fates.** See l. 197.

**285. Thrum.** The loose end of the thread used in weaving.

**303. Die.** One of a pair of dice. Another pun.

**308. Ass.** A bad pun with ace.

**315. Mote.** A trifle.

**319. Videlicet.** Namely.

**332. Leeks.** Onions.

**333. Sisters Three.** The Fates.

**338. Thread of silk.** His lovely life.

**341. Imbrue.** Make bloody.

**350. Epilogue.** A short piece of verse spoken after the play as a farewell to the audience. **Bergomask.** "A country dance in the manner of the peasants of Bergomasco in Italy." — Hammer.

**370. Foredone.** Exhausted.

**380. Hecate.** The Greek goddess of witchcraft, called triple because of her three names: Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Hecate in the lower world.

**400. Blessed.** It was a custom for the clergy to bless the bridal bed.

**411. Consecrate.** Consecrated.

**424. A dream.** Shakespeare takes pains to keep us from forgetting that the play is all a dream.

**429. Serpent's tongue.** Hisses.



## QUESTIONS

## ACT V. SCENE I.

How does Theseus explain the remarkable stories told by Bottom and the lovers? Why is Hippolyta unwilling to hear the play? Does Theseus's reason for hearing it seem to you good? Are his words and manner appropriate to a duke? Punctuate Quince's prologue properly, and account for the punctuation in the book. Comment upon the language in the Presenter's speech. What practices of Shakespeare's fellow-poets does he make ridiculous in ll. 145-146; 169-180? What quality of mind does Theseus suggest is necessary to the enjoyment of any play? Is this true? Why does Hippolyta regard the play as silly? In ll. 240-241, what is implied about the figure of the actor who took the part of Moon? Comment upon the alliteration in Pyramus's speech, ll. 271-285. Does Hippolyta's estimate of Bottom's acting agree with the opinion of his associates? Why does Theseus speak in blank verse after the dance? What does the author gain by beginning and ending the play with a mention of Theseus's wedding?

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

Why is this play properly called a comedy? Why is the title appropriate? Does the humor depend upon the situations in which the characters are placed, upon their actions, or upon the dialogue?

How many separate stories are there in the play? Which

is the most interesting? Which is the most amusing? Which serves as a background for the others? Characterize each story by an appropriate adjective. With what theme do they all deal? Which story presents a caricature of this subject? How are the stories connected so that the plot has unity? At what point does the complication of the plot reach its height and the disentanglement begin?

How long a time do the events of the play consume? Tell what happens on each day. How large a part of the action occurs in the woods and at night? Could the events of the play have taken place as well anywhere else as in Athens? Is there anything in the traditions of Greece that makes Athens a happy choice? Are the costumes, so far as they are indicated, the manners, and the customs, true to Greek history? By what nation has May 1 been celebrated as a festival? Find some anachronisms<sup>1</sup> in the play. Do they affect the value of a play?

Who is the central figure of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Divide the characters into groups and name the central figure of each group. Describe each of these central figures. Are the main characters carefully distinguished? Who is the most humorous character? What event brings all the characters together? Are any of the different groups in the wood aware of the presence of the others? What power controls the movements of all the characters in the forest?

What kind of allusions predominate in this play? Do you see any reason for this choice? Select the best description of nature. What devices does the poet use to catch atten-

<sup>1</sup> Consult a dictionary.

tion and add force? Select the two passages of five to ten lines that contain the most beautiful poetry. Find also five single lines or couplets worth quoting.

### COMPOSITION SUBJECTS

1. An imaginary account of the lives of Hermia and Ly-sander up to the time of the play.

2. A conversation among the handicraftsmen in which they decide to give a play in honor of Theseus's wedding, and select the comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe.

3. A full account of some of Puck's exploits referred to in Act II., Scene i., ll. 32-58.

4. An account of an afternoon at a London theatre when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was being acted (supposed to be given by an English boy of the sixteenth century).

5. A story to illustrate the quotation, "The course of true love never did run smooth."

6. Bottoms of the twentieth century.

7. Shakespeare's fairies: their size, power, dispositions, garments, occupations, etc.

# INDEX

- Abridgement, 134.**
- Aby, 125, 127.**
- Acheron, 127.**
- Adamant, 118.**
- A dear expense, 108.**
- Addressed, 135.**
- A dream, 137.**
- Ægle, 116.**
- After-supper, 134.**
- Aggravate, 110.**
- Amazon, 116.**
- A mermaid on a dolphin's back, 117.**
- An, 110.**
- Ancient privilege of Athens, 104.**
- And so far, etc., 127.**
- An edict in destiny, 106.**
- An if, 121.**
- Anon, 114, 124.**
- Antiopa, 116.**
- Antipodes, 124.**
- An't were, 111.**
- A play toward, 122.**
- Apollo, 118.**
- Approve, 120.**
- Apricocks, 123.**
- Are you not he, 115.**
- Ariadne, 116.**
- Arm yourself, 105.**
- Artificial, 125.**
- As a monster, 120.**
- Ass, 137.**
- As well possessed, 105.**
- As You Like It*, 125.**
- A thing of naught, 132.**
- At our stamp, 124.**
- Aurora's harbinger, 127.**
- Bacchanals, 134.**
- Barm, 115.**
- Bated, 107.**
- Batty, 127.**
- Bay'd, 130.**
- Be, 120.**
- Beames, 136.**
- Becomes, 120.**
- Begin now, 131.**
- Beguil'd, 107.**
- Be it so she will not, 104.**
- Belike, 105.**
- Bergomask, 137.**
- Beshrew, 120.**
- Best arrow, 106.**
- Beteem, 105.**
- Blessed, 137.**

Blood, 104.  
 Bodies forth, 134.  
 Bottle, 130.  
 Brake, 122.  
 Breath, 124, 132.  
 Brief, 134.  
 Broke, 106.  
 Brother, 124.  
 Brow of Egypt, 134.  
 Bully Bottom, 122.  
 Burr, 126.  
 By'r lakin, 122.  
  
 Cadmus, 130.  
 Canker-blossom, 126.  
 Cankers, 119.  
 Carthage queen, 106.  
 Cat, 119.  
 Cavalery, 130.  
 Centaurs, 134.  
 Changeling, 114.  
 Childing, 117.  
 Clerks, 135.  
 Coil, 127.  
 Coleridge, 108.  
 Collied, 105.  
 Condole, 109.  
 Confusion, 105.  
 Consecrate, 137.  
 Contagious, 116.  
 Continents, 116.  
 Corin, 116.  
 Corn, 116.  
 Costs, 125.  
 Courageous, 132.  
 Coy, 129.  
 Crazyed, 104.

Crossways, 127.  
 Crowns, 111.  
 Crystal, 125.  
 Cue, 122.  
 Cupid, 106.  
 Cupid's flower, 130.  
 Curst, 126, 128.  
  
 Darkling, 120.  
 Dead, 124.  
 Defect, 122.  
 Deriv'd, 105.  
 Desire you of more acquaint  
     ance, 123.  
 Dewlap, 115.  
 Dew-lapp'd, 130.  
 Diana, 104.  
 Dian's bud, 130.  
 Die, 137.  
 Die the death, 104.  
 Disfigure, 122.  
 Do not believe but, 119.  
 Do observance to a morn of  
     May, 106.  
 Dole, 136.  
 Dowager, 103.  
 Dragons, 127.  
 Duke, 103.  
  
 Earthlier, 104.  
 Eastern gate, 128.  
 Eat, 121.  
 Eglantine, 119.  
 Eight and six, 122.  
 Eke, 122.  
 Enthralled, 123.  
 Epilogue, 137.

- Ercles, 109.**  
**Ethiope, 126.**  
**Ever, 106.**  
**Every man's which is thought**  
**fit, 108.**  
**Exposition, 130.**  
**Extenuate, 105.**  
**Extort, 125.**  
**Eyne, 108.**
- Faining, 103.**  
**Fair, 106.**  
**Fairy, 116.**  
**Fall, 135.**  
**False Trojan, 106.**  
**Fancy, 106.**  
**Fancy-free, 118.**  
**Fancy-sick, 125.**  
**Fates, 137.**  
**Fell, 114.**  
**Female ivy, 130.**  
**Fitted, 135.**  
**Flew'd, 130.**  
**Flout, 120.**  
**Fond, 120, 127.**  
**For, 131.**  
**Forbid, 120.**  
**Foredone, 137.**  
**Forth, 106.**  
**French crown color, 111.**  
**Furies, 137.**
- Gaud, 131.**  
**Gawds, 103.**  
**Generally, 108.**  
**Gleek, 123.**  
**God's my life, 131.**
- Gossip's bowl, 115.**  
**Griffin, 118.**
- Hamlet, 110.**  
**Hecate, 137.**  
**He hath, etc., 132.**  
**Helen, 133.**  
**Hell, 105.**  
**Hempen homespuns, 122.**  
**Her, 132.**  
**Hercules, 130.**  
**Hiems', 117.**  
**High, 105.**  
**Hight, 135.**  
**His, 135.**  
**Hold or cut bowstrings, 111.**  
**How it may concern, 104.**
- I am invisible, 118.**  
**I have a beard coming, 110.**  
**Imbrue, 137.**  
**Impeach, 118.**  
**In a mask, 110.**  
**In despite, 135.**  
**In extremity, 124.**  
**In love's conference, 120.**  
**In my respect, 118**  
**In snuff, 136.**  
**Intents, 135.**  
**Interlude, 108.**  
**In this kind, 104.**  
**Is it not enough, 120.**  
**It lies in you, 117.**
- Jowl, 127.**  
**Julius Cæsar, 118.**  
**Juvenal, 122.**

- Knot-grass, 127.  
 Know of your youth, 104.  
 Lamentable comedy, 108.  
 Latch'd, 124.  
 Leeks, 137.  
 Lesser, 120.  
 Leviathan, 118.  
 Like, 107.  
 Like a jewel, 131.  
 Limander, 135.  
 Lingers, 103.  
 Lion-fell, 136.  
 Lob, 114.  
 Lode-stars, 107.  
 Lover's food, 107.  
 Lover's grace, 135.  
 Lulled in these flowers, 119.  
 Lysander, 134.  
 Marry, 108.  
 Masques, 134.  
 Matched in mouth like bells,  
     131.  
 Maze'd, 117.  
 Mazes, 116.  
 Mechanicals, 124.  
 Melts, 131.  
*Merchant of Venice*, 107, 116,  
     123.  
 Mewed, 104.  
 Might, 135.  
 Milton's *L'Allegro*, 114, 128.  
 Mimic, 124.  
 Minimus, 127.  
 Misgraffed, 105.  
 Misprision, 125.  
 Monstrous little, 110.  
 Moones, 113.  
 More better, 122.  
 Mote, 137.  
 Murrain, 116.  
 Must, 116.  
 Myself, 107.  
 Near, 120.  
 Neeze, 116.  
 Neif, 129.  
 Neptune, 117.  
 Newts, 119.  
 Night-rule, 124.  
 Nine men's morris, 116.  
 Ninny's, 136.  
 Nor I cannot, 118.  
 Nor . . . taste, 107.  
 Not so neither, 123.  
 Now name the rest, 110.  
 Nowl, 124.  
 Nymph, 119.  
 Obscenely, 111.  
 Odious, 122.  
 Oes, 125.  
 Of, 105, 120.  
 Of force, 124.  
 Of the first, 126.  
 On a misprised mood, 124.  
 One crest, 126.  
 One man . . . oath, 125.  
 Orbs, 113.  
 Or in the night . . . bear,  
     134.  
 Original, 117.  
 Ounce, 119.

Ousel, 123.  
Owe, 120.  
Oxlips, 119.  
  
Painted, 126.  
Pale, 113.  
Pale companion, 103.  
Pard, 119.  
Parlous, 122.  
Pat, 121, 135.  
Patched fool, 131.  
Patches, 124.  
Pensioners, 114.  
Perigouna, 116.  
Persever, 126.  
Phibbus', 110.  
Phillida, 116.  
Philomel, 119.  
Phoebe, 107.  
Pity of my life, 122.  
Poet, 133.  
Prologue, 122, 135.  
Proper, 111.  
Properties, 111.  
Puppet, 126.  
Purple-in-grain, 111.  
Pyramus and Thisbe, 109.  
  
Quaint, 119.  
Quern, 115.  
  
Recorder, 135.  
Recreant, 128.  
Rent, 126.  
Rere-mice, 119.  
Rheumatic, 117.  
Right, 127.

L

Ripe, 120, 134.  
Roar you, 111.  
Robin Goodfellow, 114.  
Roundel, 119.  
Russet-pated choughs, 124.  
  
Sanded, 130.  
Scrip, 108.  
Self-affairs, 105.  
Serpent's tongue, 137.  
Shafalus, 136.  
Shall, 104.  
Shall hear more, 131.  
Sheen, 114.  
Shows her, 120.  
Shrewd, 114.  
Silently, 123.  
Sisters three, 137.  
Sixpence a day, 132.  
Some, 107.  
Sort, 124.  
So sorrow . . . stay, 124.  
So we grew together, 125.  
Spartan kind, 130.  
Sphere, 124.  
Sphery, 120.  
Spleen, 105.  
Sport alone, 125.  
Spotted, 105.  
Square, 114.  
Squash, 123.  
Stand upon points, 135.  
Still, 107, 127.  
Stolen . . . fantasy, 103.  
Stood upon, 105.  
Stop, 135.  
Straw-color, 111.



- Strings, 132.  
 Sucking dove, 111.  
 Sweet Puck, 115.  
  
 Tailor, 115.  
 Tartars, 125.  
 Taurus, 125.  
 Fawny Tartar, 126.  
 That, 117.  
 The best . . . but shadows,  
     136.  
 The eye of man, 132.  
 The Fates, 136.  
 The human mortals . . . here,  
     116.  
 The man, etc., 128.  
 The muses, 135.  
 The raging rocks, 110.  
 There are . . . please, 122.  
 Therefore, 117.  
 The rite of May, 131.  
*The Vicar of Wakefield*, 115.  
 Things base and vile . . . dig-  
     nity, 107.  
 Third part of a minute, 119.  
 This . . . rest, 136.  
 Thorough, 113, 117.  
 Thread of silk, 137.  
 Throstle, 123.  
 Thrum, 137.  
 Tide, 136.  
 Tiring-house, 122.  
 To have spoke, 105.  
 Tongs and bones, 130.  
 To tear a cat in, 110.  
 Translated, 123.  
 Transported, 132.  
  
 Triumph, 103.  
 Troth, 120.  
 True love turned, 125.  
 Tyrant, 109.  
  
 Unbreathed, 135.  
 Uncouple, 130.  
 Unheedy, 107.  
  
 Vaward, 130.  
 Venturous, 130.  
 Venus, 106.  
 Vestal, 117.  
 Videlicet, 137.  
 Virgin patent, 104.  
 Vixen, 127.  
 Votaress, 118.  
 Vot'ress, 117.  
 Vows so born . . . appears,  
     125.  
  
 Wanton, 116.  
 Weak bond, 126.  
 Weed, 119.  
 Weeds, 120.  
 Well moused, 136.  
 Were, 110.  
 Were I best, 111.  
 Were stol'n, 118.  
 What, 126.  
 When truth . . . tales, 125.  
 Whittier, 114.  
 Withering . . . revenue, 103.  
 With parted eye, 131.  
 With the morning's love, 127.  
 Wode, 118.

**Woodbine**, 119, 130.

**Worser**, 118.

**Wot**, 128, 131.

**Wrath**, 114.

**Yielder**, 124.

**Your wrongs**, 119.

**You see. etc.**, 122.

**You were best**, 108.















